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NDER THE EAGLE'S WING

SARA MILLER

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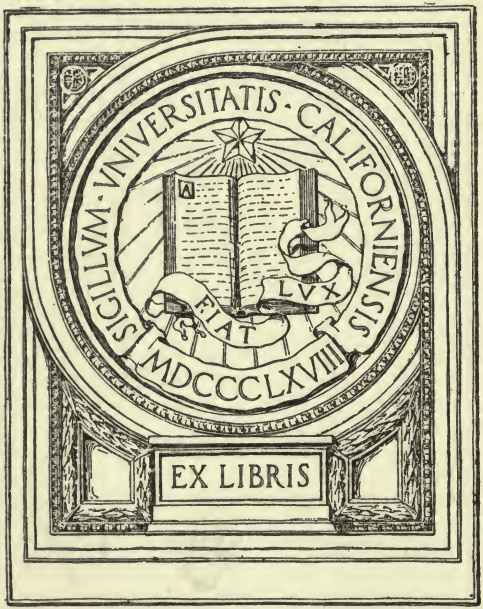

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UNDER THE EAGLE'S WING

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UNDER THE EAGLE'S WING

BY

SARA MILLER

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

PHILADELPHIA
THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA
1899

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The Jewish Publication Society of America

The Lord Baltimore Press
THE FRIEDENWALD COMPANY
BALTIMORE, MD., U. S. A.

PREFATORY NOTE

The portrait of Moses Maimonides which forms the frontispiece of this volume is indirectly derived from the *Thesaurus Ugolini*, Venice, 1744, volume I, page 384. The author of the Thesaurus makes the statement that it was taken from an old painting. Its authenticity cannot, however, be said to be established. The signature is after a photograph of a letter recovered from the Cairo Genizah by Dr. S. Schechter.

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UNDER THE EAGLE'S WING

CHAPTER I

A STRANGER FROM THE NORTH

DURING the reign of Sultan Saladin, Europe, swept by an outburst of religious feeling, prepared a great military expedition, the purpose of which was to wrest the Holy Sepulchre from its Saracen possessors. So enormous was the extent of the enterprise, and so great the excitement attending it, that there was hardly a Christian of standing who, though he had but a handful of followers, was not making ready to join the Crusade.

The wealth of that time consisted principally of large estates, owned by noblemen and cultivated by vassals. The dependents, in return for a lord's protection and the use of his lands, rendered him a tithe of their crops and what military service he demanded. Thus many a nobleman, whose bounteous board and great castle made it no tax to support a company of men-at-arms, was now hard put to it to secure equipment and transportation for his followers. Even kings felt the lack of ready money.

Commerce, always the greatest source of wealth to a nation, was almost entirely in the hands of the Jews. Forbidden to possess lands, they were obliged to turn to barter as a means of livelihood. Every

occupation closed to him, the Jew bent all his energies upon the accumulation of treasures, and many were the tales told of the fabulous wealth of Jewish merchants.

When the leaders of the Crusade began to feel the need of gold, their attention naturally turned to the hoarded riches of these despised people. Even so great a king as Richard of England considered it no shame to appropriate by violence the money he required. Fanatical mobs robbed and pillaged the Jewish quarters, and it was a common occurrence for half the Jews of a city to be murdered.

So it happened that, having been orphaned by the excess of piety which usually followed the Jew's denial of a Christian's demands,

Joseph Ibn Assan found himself wandering about the Egyptian city of Fostat, hoping there to find the refuge he sought.

It was Friday, the Mahometan Sabbath. The muezzins were chanting the noon salutation from the minarets of a mosque Closely wrapped in his burnoose, Joseph rested in the shade of neighboring trees and shrubbery. As he watched the crowds moving toward their place of worship, he changed his position in order to see the devotions of the Moslems, but he was careful to remain unobserved, for he knew that at their prayers the Mahometans tolerated none whom they considered infidels.

The service was long finished, but our youth still lingered, unwilling

to leave the shelter of his lounging-place for the uncertainty of the streets. Finally he arose, and, giving himself a shake, shouldered his bundle.

"Joseph, my lad," he said, "thou hadst best be jogging along, for thou must find shelter ere the Sabbath sets in." He forthwith deserted the shade of the grove for the streets, where he stood in uncertainty, until, seeing that his perplexity was attracting notice, he made bold to accost a passer-by.

"Canst thou tell me," he asked, mustering the Arabic his father had taught him, "where Moses Ibn Maimon dwells?"

"One could scarcely remain a day in Fostat, and not discover that," answered the pedestrian, "for

we all have cause to know him. The physician of the Sultan, may Allah preserve him, is the best known of all great men. Well is he called Moses, for who but one that deserves to be ranked with Allah's saints could be so noble and still a Jew? If thou seekest the benefit of his healing art, thou must wait until his duties at the palace are over. So many are the poor he attendeth that, 'tis said, he giveth to them as much time as to the royal family."

"'Tis not as a patient I would see him," answered Joseph, while the man stared at the travel-stained and ragged youth, who apparently had no idea of the eminence of Maimon's position. He courteously gave the requested information, and Joseph, thanking him, con-

tinued his quest. He searched the better part of the city, scanning closely the overhanging casements and deep-set doors, until he found the house which corresponded to the description given him. Here he paused, somewhat daunted by its palatial appearance and the lack of life which it shared with its neighbors. At not a single window a face was visible. There he stood, uncertain how to proceed, and feeling so strange and homesick that he almost regretted having come. With an effort he aroused himself, saying, "He who dares not, wins not," and ventured in.

Undiscovered he penetrated to a small court, evidently meant for the visitors of the great physician, but now empty.

Excepting the space occupied by a cooling fountain, the ground was paved with black and white marble. At the sides were low seats covered with cushions. The corners were filled with a profusion of potted plants, which gave the place a garden-like appearance.

Joseph was wondering if he ought to announce his presence, or wait until he was observed, when he became aware of a slave who regarded him with natural suspicion.

"Who art thou, and what dost thou here?" she asked sharply.

"I ask pardon if I have transgressed in entering thus, for, being a stranger in the city, I know not its ways. I would fain see Rabbi Maimon, if he dwells here."

"It is his home, but what wouldst thou of him?"

"Prithee, tell him that a stranger from the North doth crave speech of him."

She soon returned, and, bidding Joseph follow, entered the house through a door which opened into the court. They passed through a room, luxurious in its furnishing and indicating the wealth of the owners, who had surrounded themselves with the best that Moorish art could suggest. Rich draperies were hung from cornices of carved wood, and what little wood was visible in the furniture was wrought in delicate, open-work fashion. The mosaic floor was partially covered with heavy rugs. Close to the wall was the estrade usually seen in Eastern houses, in this case upholstered with brocade and decorated

with piles of brightly covered cushions.

"Evidently a reception room," thought Joseph, as they left it to enter one of far different appearance, which might have been either the laboratory of a chemist or the study of a scholar.

Seated at a table, a dignified man of apparently fifty was intently watching the contents of a tube before him, while he absent-mindedly stroked his beard. Without raising his eyes, he motioned the visitor to a low stool, and continued to observe the progress of his experiment.

Nothing loath, Joseph sat down an interested spectator, but his attention soon wandered to the chemist, whose stern face with its

heavy black beard was made more forbidding by a deep frown. Joseph was not surprised, for Maimonides was known throughout the Jewish world as the foremost scholar of his time, whose wonderfully acute works had earned for him the epithet of the "Great Eagle," as well as made him many enemies within the Synagogue, in which he was a leader. As Joseph sat there, he could not help wondering if the face before him ever relaxed into a smile. His thoughts were answered by a twinkle in the deep-set eyes of the Rabbi, who had noticed the boy watching him as solemn as a sphinx.

Laying aside the tube, which had ceased its bubbling and hissing, he greeted his visitor, asking his name and errand.

"I am come from the North to seek the assistance of the former friend of Benjamin Ibn Assan, whose son I am," said Joseph. "This letter, which he bade me bear unto you, the illustrious Rabbi, was written when he knew that death had claimed him."

"Benjamin Ibn Assan," mused the Rabbi. "It must be he whom I knew in Cordova, where we were fellow-students. 'Tis many years since he returned to his home in France, and my news of him hath been scant. And he is no more?" he added. "If his manhood bore out the promise of his youth, then, indeed, Israel hath lost a noble son."

"Never was truer word spoken," answered Joseph, his face suddenly

glowing with enthusiasm. "No human being appealed to him in vain, for he was ever ready to welcome Jew or Gentile who stood in need of succor. Yet it becomes me little to boast of that which hath found scant favor in the eyes of others."

The Rabbi raised his eyebrows interrogatively, and looked with some amusement at the youth, neither abashed on account of his strangeness nor yet over-bold.

"Naught it availed him, when the Count de Fournoire, casting about for plunder wherewith to satisfy his free lances, fell upon Benjamin Ibn Assan as one rich in goods and silver. In vain my father endeavored to still his enemy's avarice," Joseph continued

bitterly. "When neither threats nor torture produced more treasure, they killed him in a manner which brooks not description. Thus they showed how lightly they held the life of a Jew."

Then, forgetting all but the sense of his misfortune, he buried his head in his hands. His shoulders shook, but he uttered no sound.

The Rabbi musing paced to and fro. He sympathized with the boy, although he said nothing, for he was considering less the tale—common enough in those days—than the probable character of the youth before him. He debated what was to be done for him, since he was so plainly in need of help. Actuated by such feelings, he addressed his visitor, who had now become calmer.

"Had thy father spoken aught to thee of thy training?" he asked.

"I was apprenticed to a goldsmith, and had nigh served my term when I was robbed of his love and aid. Therefore I made bold to appeal to you, hoping for permission to enter the warehouse of the great Maimon."

The Rabbi, impressed by the boy's seriousness, looked at him with new interest.

"When thou hast completed thy service, what then?" he asked.

"I shall try to bear my father's name worthily,"—here the sense of his wrongs fired him—"and mete out to the Count de Fournoire such punishment as he rightly deserves."

The latter speech made Maimon smile.

"Thou shalt have thy chance," said he, adding in a more serious tone, "Do but show thyself worthy, and thou shalt not find me niggardly of advancement."

"I have not words wherewith to thank you," Joseph answered, his voice trembling. "Never shall you regret your bounty, if, by faithful and zealous service, I may prove my gratitude."

"I believe thee," said Maimon, reseating himself. Taking one of the quills upon the table, he drew his writing materials toward him, and began to write an order upon his superintendent for the admission of Joseph Ibn Assan as apprentice into the warehouse of the brothers Maimon.

Having finished and sealed the

missive, the Rabbi rose, and clapped his hands twice.

"Thou hast much to learn concerning the customs of our city," he said to Joseph, "for thou art come from a Christian country, and a stranger, be he Jew or Gentile, stands in peril an he conforms not to Mahometan customs."

Then he turned to the boy who had entered, and was awaiting his orders.

"Thou mayest tell Abdah that the work is satisfactory," he said, while the boy saluted in Eastern fashion, "and, Raphael, thou shalt be this youth's guide. Show him where he may procure proper garb and aught else that he may stand in need of."

"This order," he continued to

Joseph, "give to the master to whom Raphael will direct thee. And now there remains but for me to hear a statement of thy wealth," he added, smiling kindly.

"I have still a few pieces, more than sufficient for my scant needs," replied Joseph, coloring, "but I thank you none the less for your interest."

"Then haste thee to secure lodging and clothing, for 'twould be but wanton risk to be seen abroad thus," said Maimonides, dismissing them with a "God be with you."

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP

As THEY passed into the street, Joseph looked wonderingly at the light, freckled skin of his companion and at his grey eyes, which twinkled beneath his turban; for Raphael's merry face with its northern cast of features seemed incongruous with Arab garb, which Joseph had always associated with Moslem gravity.

Raphael, who had no mind to bear this scrutiny with quiet, broke the silence by saying gaily: "And so thou art come to grace our worthy brotherhood of goldsmiths?"

"Such is indeed my intention, but methinks there is more immediate need of added grace here," answered Joseph, with a smile, as he glanced at his dusty clothes.

"In truth, thou art right, and since fate has decreed that we are to work together, we may as well join hands in friendship," said Raphael more seriously.

"Right gladly will I," replied Joseph, clasping the proffered hand. "Thy name is Raphael, I know; I am Joseph, son of Benjamin Ibn Assan."

"And now, friend Joseph, let us to this other gear, as the Franks say," responded Raphael briskly. "Thou must have lodgings first of all, wherein thou mayest remain until I procure thee proper garb.

What sayest thou to sharing my room? I do not follow the usual custom of apprentices, but have a separate lodging, that I may come and go freely."

"'Twill suit me excellently, if the fee be not too great, for I must live somewhat closely."

"Nay, Dame Rebecca will not make a great demand, for she is of our own people, moreover, she is kindly disposed," Raphael answered, as he led the way down a side street that they might escape observation. "The dwelling," he continued, "is without the gates of the Mellah, as they call the Jewish quarter. For I had no stomach to wear their badge and bear their spittings and revilings with humility, for, although the Sultan, whom the Lord pre-

serve, hath decreed freedom of worship to the Jews, 'tis as though he had not spoken among the ignorant zealots, who must hate a Jew because their fathers did. Why, look thee, Joseph," said he, stopping short in the road and speaking impressively, "if one doth wear the badge of Jewry, he may be set upon and robbed without being able to seek redress. A Jew may be murdered even, and no one suffer for it. Therefore, many of us dwell without the Mellah, and pass for Moslems, thereby also escaping the tax, which hath been increased of late."

Then, as they walked on, he asked, "Tell me, is it otherwise in the North?"

"Nay, it is said that there is

more freedom and safety here. But how didst thou guess that I come from the North?"

"Thy Arabic comes somewhat slowly, as though thou wert not over-accustomed to it—but here we are," he added. They stopped before the door of a house which had the white-washed walls of many of the city buildings.

Raphael bestowed a vigorous knock upon the panels before him, and the door was opened. Within the entrance they came upon a rather stout woman, who smiled good-naturedly when she saw Raphael.

"I might have known that no other than thou would come thundering thus at the door, thou madcap!" she exclaimed.

"Nay, good dame, 'twas but in

anxiety that thou shouldst see my friend, Joseph Ibn Assan," he said, blandly waving his hand toward Joseph, "who, being a stranger within our gates, doth ask for hospitality. That is to say," continued he in sober tones, "we have come to see if thou canst receive another of our people who hath not much to offer thee in return. He may share my room, and will require but little else."

"Right gladly I will receive him," the dame answered. "Thou mayest take him with thee now, Raphael."

"I thank thee, good dame," said Joseph, speaking for the first time. "But what arrangements shall we make as to requital?"

"That we shall discuss at some other season," answered Rebecca,

laughing, as she beat a hasty retreat.

Raphael led the way to the room, which was of tolerable size, with two windows overlooking the courtyard. It was sparely furnished, the most noticeable feature being a couch, or divan, upon which Joseph threw himself with a sigh of relief. Drawing a purse from his girdle, he handed a few pieces of money to Raphael, who went to purchase the necessary garments.

Joseph fell into a nap, and suddenly awoke to find Raphael sitting gravely upon the floor, surrounded by his purchases, which he had secured in the Mellah.

"Will the gracious S'id be pleased to array himself?" he asked with mock humility as Joseph arose.

Then, spreading out the garments, he proceeded to give him instructions in their uses and advantages, not forgetting to criticise Joseph's personal appearance, of which he rather approved. Although the two boys were of nearly the same age, Joseph was much the taller. Being broad of shoulder, he looked more than his sixteen years, which was in his favor in the East, where a boy is expected at eighteen to have the dignity of a man. Nor did their dissimilarity in appearance end here, for Joseph was dark in complexion, with a clearly cut and rather aquiline nose, firmly set jaw and chin, and dark, serious eyes. Comparison of the two lads made Raphael's mischievous face seem all the more boyish.

Having donned his new clothing, the full trousers closing at the ankles and the sash about the waist amusing him not a little, Joseph stood before his companion, who surveyed him critically, with head cocked and one eye closed.

"Thou lookest the veriest Moslem," he said. "With a turban, thou mightst be son to Mahomet himself."

"Perchance I may be questioned," said Joseph anxiously, "and I know not Moslem ceremonies."

"Thou hast but to say, 'There is but one God'—which is true—'and Mahomet is his Prophet'—which thou needst not believe," he added in parenthesis, "and thou art safe."

"'Tis curious how oft we Jews must change," remarked Joseph.

"In the North we must wear the yellow cap and badge of Jewry that each man-at-arms may know that we are safe plunder; here we escape the same degradation by wearing the garb and performing the ceremonies of the Moslem."

"'Tis not a change," answered Raphael thinking. "We are indeed as the leopard who changes not his spots; we do but don another coat for convenience. What glory were gained in fighting Mahomet, who hath no more divinity than our Maimon?"

"It were wiser to outwit him," said Joseph slowly. "These persecutions do but hold us faster to our faith. Who knows," he continued with shining eyes, "but that the future may see Israel again re-

spected and ranked among the nations?"

"A truce to thy meditations," interrupted Raphael. "There is that within me which calls still more loudly than our wrongs, for 'tis long past the evening meal. Let us take our supper to the roof and see the sun set."

Taking a mat of twisted grass, some figs, a loaf of bread, and a jar of milk, all of which he had bought in the Mellah, he prepared to ascend to the roof, Joseph following. There Joseph saw what was new to him, though common enough in Eastern houses. A sort of garden had been formed by planting vines and small shrubs in boxes around the edge of the roof. Mingled with these were bright flowers and at intervals

small palms in pots. The centre was covered with a rug, upon which were seats made of cushions, and overhead was a sort of awning to serve as a shield from the sun's rays. Here they sat, eating their frugal meal and breathing the perfume of the flowers, while they watched the brilliant and constantly changing colors of the sinking sun.

"I would thou toldest me what magic thou didst use with the Rabbi," said Raphael suddenly, "for never have I seen him unbend so much as unto thee."

"I have always heard his great goodness praised," answered Joseph, "but, truth to tell, his seeming sternness did damp my courage at first. E'en now I hardly know

whether he helped me from kindness of heart, or because I was an unfortunate Jew."

"Stern he is," said Raphael, "but withal the kindest man in Fostat and mayhap, next to the Sultan, the greatest. Indeed he is one of the most powerful and envied at court. Such a man is not like to wear his kindness as we do, there being too many ready to profit by it an it were too easily reached."

Joseph thought of the boldness he had shown in supplicating one so high in station. "Truly," he thought, "ignorance will dare when wisdom hesitates. Had I known that Maimon was so far removed, methinks I should have considered twice ere I ventured into his presence. Nevertheless I

have learned that a Jew, e'en though he be great among Gentiles, feels for his own."

The morning following the Sabbath Joseph was awakened by Raphael, who asked his friend to accompany him to the bath, which Joseph was glad to do, feeling the need of more vigorous ablutions than he had yet obtained in Fostat. In cleanliness, as in many other points of civilization, the East rose superior to Europe. There was very little life in the narrow, crooked streets, for the shops which lined both sides of the thoroughfares were not yet open. Here and there they met a sleepy-looking porter just opening the wooden street gates which he had closed the night before. They turned into

a by-way, hardly more than a lane, with balconies and casements on opposite sides, which seemed ludicrously out of place in such narrow quarters. They passed on into a broader street, and approached the baths. To Joseph the building seemed extremely beautiful for this part of the city. The exterior was ornamented in red and white, making it resemble the front of a mosque upon which the best architectural skill had been spent.

At the door of the bath, they were met by a servant, who, taking their shoes, provided them with wooden clogs, for the pavement was wet. Then they entered a large apartment with floors and walls of white marble. Overhead there was a kind of glazed dome through

which the sun's light penetrated, and in the centre was a fountain with a marble basin, around the edge of which were seats. Here the boys prepared for the bath, and then went into the next room, the inner apartment, which was heated by hot water rising in great steaming jets from a fountain. There were several divans, and upon these as well as upon the seats around the fountain were bathers, perspiring profusely. They were attended by servants, who were kneading and wringing their bodies until each joint cracked. Joseph viewed this operation with rather comic alarm.

"I am not minded to have my poor limbs so wrenched and twisted that they will seem to have been

upon the rack of the northern Gentiles," said he whimsically.

Raphael, laughing, said, "Then thou shalt not undergo the dreadful ordeal, though 'tis good after one has grown accustomed to it. Come thou with me."

They passed into another chamber, where the attendant lathered their bodies with soap, using as a sponge the fibre of the palm-tree, or *leef*. After a dip in a tank of warm water and brisk rubbing with napkins, the boys were ready to return home for a breakfast as plain as the supper of the night before.

Their meal finished, they turned their steps toward the part of the city which was to be the scene of Joseph's new service. After walk-

ing a short distance, they came to a plain, white-washed building, the door of which stood open. Joseph, following Raphael, entered a long, narrow room, with a number of windows at each side. Against these were work-benches, about ten in number, which were not in use, but Joseph noticed that at each table there was a boy evidently preparing for the day's labor.

Raphael took his friend to the bench at which he worked, saying:

"Since my preceptor, who is the overseer, is not yet come, thou mayest wait here. I must arrange what tools and materials are necessary for the work. 'Tis the custom here for each apprentice to make ready his preceptor's bench."

After waiting a while, Joseph

saw a man enter, who, he fancied, was the superintendent. A nod from Raphael proving that his surmise was correct, he advanced toward the new-comer, whose grim-looking features became no pleasanter as he said curtly, "With whom hast thou traffic thus early?"

"I have a communication for the S'id Abdah," answered Joseph, holding out Maimon's missive and wondering what kind of life an apprentice would lead under such a chief.

Abdah—this was the overseer's name—read the note, and, pointing to an unoccupied bench, told Joseph to seat himself. He gave him a design drawn on paper, and asked him if he could engrave it upon the

base of the silver vase which stood upon the table. He stood by in silence, watching the work, but never changing his expression. Joseph looked up occasionally, hoping for some sign of approval. Seeing none, he began to fear that his work was not satisfactory.

Finally the superintendent asked in his harsh voice :

"What did thy former mentor say of thy task?"

"He greatly praised my advancement," answered Joseph a little timidly, "and promised that in a short time I might become a master-workman."

Abdah nodded his head slowly.

"Thou hast indeed but little need of longer apprenticeship," he said. "When thou hast finished that vase,

thou mayest engrave this piece, that I may see if thou hast aught of originality." So saying, he gave Joseph a silver goblet, and, seating himself at a bench near by, began to work at a delicate gold ornament, while Joseph stared at the silver piece in astonishment, for Abdah's manner had led him to expect anything but approbation.

At sundown the day's work was ended, and the boys bent their steps homeward, Raphael elated by his friend's success, Joseph quiet and happy in the thought that he had won Abdah's approval.

They walked along, speaking little until they heard the voice of the muezzins announcing the time for prayer. As all others in the streets cast themselves upon the

ground, prayer carpets under knees and faces towards Mecca, Joseph and Raphael were obliged to do likewise, pretending to repeat the prayers which the Moslem recites at sundown.

Upon reaching home they found Dame Rebecca and supper awaiting them. The rest of the evening they spent upon the roof playing chess, which was then an ordinary form of amusement.

So passed Joseph's first day in the service of Maimonides, and many like it followed.

CHAPTER III

STOLEN WATERS

As Joseph was one of the older boys, and had practically finished his apprenticeship, Abdah watched him closely, observing the earnestness and fidelity with which he worked. After a month or more Joseph began to notice the confidence which the overseer seemed to place in him, and he was further encouraged by being occasionally sent with messages to Moses Maimon. The Rabbi, in order to pursue his studies, left the greater part of the business responsibility to his brother David and his represen-

tative Abdah. Besides holding the position of court-physician, Maimon, or Maimonides, as he is also called, was at the head of the congregations of Egypt, and his name stands out as that of the most intellectual Rabbi and deeply religious philosopher of medieval times. Following the example of other Rabbis, he considered it nobler to study the Law for the love of it and to depend upon other pursuits for support.

David Maimon, however, made expeditions to the Indies, at that time the centre of the world's wealth, and during his brother's absence it was necessary to consult the Rabbi more than usually. Often he was too much occupied to visit the workshop, and at such times Joseph was sent to him. However,

he saw him but rarely; he generally delivered his message to a servant, and awaited the answer in the court.

One day he was detained longer than usually, the Rabbi being occupied, and our youth was fain to employ himself with a manuscript book which he had found on the seat. As he sat there, a young girl entered the court. She was dark-haired and dark-eyed, and her loose white silk vest with its silver clasps made a striking setting for her beauty, the vivacity of which did not permit it to be classed as Oriental. Without looking about, she seated herself, and began to play upon the lute she carried. Joseph, believing that she had not seen him, returned to his reading, and he was so absorbed that some minutes

passed before he became conscious of the fact that his companion had ceased to play. Glancing up, he met her look of curiosity, which changed to amusement when she saw his embarrassment; for it was considered a breach of etiquette for a stranger to see the women of a noble family.

"I had not meant to intrude upon your privacy," he began, blushing furiously, "and do ask your pardon if my remaining here hath been unseemly."

"Thou hast no need to look as one discovered in guilt," she answered, smiling, "for truth to tell, 'tis I who am unseemly, since I did know of thy presence. Art thou not Joseph Ibn Assan?"

"Such is indeed my name, though

how thou didst guess it passeth my understanding," he answered, wondering who she was, and why she was so friendly.

"I am Esther, daughter of David Maimon," said she brightly, "and as for knowing thee, when I saw thee reading and looking as grave as the most solemn of Israel's judges, methought that yonder sprig could be no other than he of whom my uncle did tell my father."

"I give thee thanks for thy courtesy. One of thy father's artificers should be happy, indeed, if he hath given amusement even unwittingly," he answered, not made too comfortable by her raillery.

"Oh, 'twas vastly amusing," said she, mischief gleaming in her dark eyes, "to see thee poring over yonder

volume, as if naught else in life had savor for thee."

"Tell me," she added, her impulse changing, "dost thou indeed care to read such?" pointing to the book.

"'Tis truly a pleasure I prize above all others," he answered earnestly, "though but rarely I have the opportunity to gratify my taste for it, for such a book costs as much as I may earn in a year."

"My uncle hath many which, methinks, he would lend thee, if thou didst but ask."

"Seyid Moses hath already been my benefactor, and far be it from me to presume upon his kindness with such a request."

"But some he hath which he doth read no more," said she hesitatingly.

"If thou but wilt!" he exclaimed, instantly guessing her meaning.

"It is simple enough. Thou canst take that one, for it was lent to me, and when thou returnest it, place it behind this palm. It is my plant, and the jar is never moved. Thou mayest always take with thee the one I shall place there."

Joseph was so astonished at his good fortune that he nearly forgot to thank Esther, who, in fact, hardly waited, for she suddenly remembered her mother's injunction concerning the propriety of speaking to strangers. With visions of confinement to her room, accompanied by a diet of bread and water, she seized her lute, and fled into the house.

"I had thought it a dream," mused Joseph, "but that she had

too much of gaiety and kindliness to be aught but living. To gain her friendship were worth a great risk, even incurring the Rabbi's anger —if perchance we do meet again, for truly she left me with over-suddenness."

He was still marvelling at her sudden departure when the servant delivered the answer, and he returned to his work, happier than he had been in many a day.

Raphael stared open-mouthed when Joseph told him of his luck, and when he heard of the arrangement between Esther and his friend for the future supply and return of books, his astonishment knew no bounds.

"Thou art a bold one," he exclaimed. "Esther Maimon, in sooth!

'Tis a wonder that your worship hath not requested a favor of the Sultan."

"Thou needst not make so much of it," answered Joseph, nettled at Raphael's irony. "And as for the Sultan, should circumstances warrant it, methinks I should not be backward in asking."

It was at the end of the day, and they were seated upon the roof. Raphael arose, walked a little distance, then turned, and performed an elaborate obeisance.

"Room for the Seyid Assan," he commanded, waving his arms toward imaginary crowds.

"Have done with thy mocking," responded Joseph, laughing. "Thou knowest thou art as glad as I am."

"Tell me," said Raphael suddenly,

"was there much astir at the Rabbi's house? All Fostat is agog with excitement, for 'tis said that the great Abdel-latif hath journeyed from Bagdad expressly to visit Maimon, so far-famed hath our Eagle become. Methinks that no Jew hath been so honored since we have become wanderers."

"I saw naught of it," said Joseph, listening to this new evidence of Maimon's greatness with interest.

"Thou wert too much absorbed by thy new acquaintance to have eyes or ears for much else," retorted Raphael, but his friend was not listening.

"Bethink thee, Raphael," said Joseph, coming out of a brown study, "how many books we may be able to read. The Rabbi Maimon

hath even all written by the great Rabbis of Bagdad and the Moorish philosophers of Cordova. Rare interest we shall find in the thoughts of the world's sages."

"Thou art learning-mad, methinks," said Raphael, looking wonderingly at his friend. "As for me, it is not to my liking. Why should I ponder over musty volumes, when so many learned men do naught else, and do it to much better purpose than I could? Surely, it is sufficient to obey the Law and leave study to wise men."

"If thou dost really believe so, thou art no genuine son of Israel; for doth not our strength depend upon the true interpretation of God's Law? My father was wont to say, that 'he who increaseth his

knowledge of the Law, and augmenteth his study, doth increase in life and in wisdom.' Therefore thou wilt read with me," pleaded Joseph, throwing his arm around Raphael's neck.

"If thou wilt, thou wilt, and methinks I had better not oppose thee, for thou wilt but din thy reading into mine ears morning, noon, and night," answered Raphael, glad to share his friend's studies, yet not willing to relinquish the chance of teasing upon so fruitful a subject.

Joseph continued to receive the books, and was often met by Esther, who always was greatly interested in all he had to tell of his work and reading. Thus their chance acquaintance ripened into warm friendship, of a kind as unusual in

the East then as now, for Oriental customs have never permitted girls to possess such freedom as Esther enjoyed, and, indeed, had she not been an only and much petted daughter, Joseph would never have delighted in the friendship which he valued so highly, and which became a necessity to him. Raphael bore himself as a kind of younger brother, whose business it was to admire and tease his senior. To Esther Joseph could turn for such sympathy and encouragement as brothers usually expect from sisters. Truth to tell, they had known each other scarce three months ere Esther had heard of his past life and future hopes.

"'Tis splendid to be a man and do as one wills," she said, sighing,

"though my uncle says that to be a true housewife is as good in the eyes of the Lord as to be a great merchant or scholar. Knowest thou," she continued, "that in a week I shall be fourteen? I shall don the garb of a woman, and my uncle hath promised that I shall read such of his books as beseem a Jewish woman. But with gossip I had nigh forgot what I meant to tell thee, for 'tis great news. Thou hast heard of the poet Alsaid?"

Joseph nodded his head as she continued, "He hath writ a poem, which was recited last week at court. It doth run:

'All bod'ly ills great Galen's craft can cure,
But Maimon heals man's body and his soul;
Nor can, before his skill, which all extol,
The malady of ignorance endure.

And if the moon would call upon his art,
Her spots, when full her orb, would disappear,
And he could always round her waning sphere,
When in conjunction she doth lose a part.'"

"It created some excitement, I promise thee," exclaimed Joseph with animation.

"Some were like to turn green with envy," answered she, "but for that Maimon cares not a whit. His preferment at court he values, believing that thus he will be able to befriend the Jews, toward whom 'tis said the Sultan is well disposed. 'Tis scarce a fortnight since the wise Abdel-latif did say, that from Spain to India and from the sources of the Euphrates and the Tigris to the banks of the Nile there was none to compare with Maimon. But all this thou must know, for

here in Fostat they call him 'the Enlightener of the eyes of Israel.' Yet, with all the honor heaped upon him, he is still the kindest and best of uncles. But 'tis near the time for the assembling of the patients, and I must not linger with thee," she added, smiling as she left him.

The next week Esther met him clad in her new clothes and walking demurely. Joseph could guess at the mischievous smile and dancing eyes lurking behind the veil, which she had thrown over her face instead of letting it conceal the part of her countenance below the eyes, as was usually done. Then, throwing back her veil, she stood like a child waiting for admiration of her pretty garments. Her loose gown of soft silk was gathered at the

throat, and fastened by gold clasps set with pearls. The sleeves were loose and open at the wrists, showing the gold bracelets between the hand and the elbow. Over her gown she wore a short vest of heavy material embroidered with pearls. Her silk veil was attached to the gold band which bound her dark hair, and was meant to be dropped over her face at the approach of a stranger. There was nothing odd in this to Joseph, for it was the garb and custom of Jews as well as of other Oriental nations.

"Hereafter thou must not expect to see me here," she said, "for what the maid did, were not seemly in a woman."

"Those strange new gewgaws of thine have worked a wonderful

change," responded Joseph wrathfully, "if thou art so ready to forget me. I shall have to get me a silken rag to wear before mine eyes, if 'twill make me forget thee."

"If thou art not enough to try the patience of a Patriarch!" she exclaimed. "Canst thou not comprehend that I must now sit with the women of the household, and do as they do?"

Then she suddenly remembered what he had said, and she began to wonder how he, with his sprouting mustache, would look in a veil.

"Right proper and maidenly wouldst thou seem in a veil!" she exclaimed with a peal of laughter, in which Joseph joined. "But thou needst not fear," she added after a little. "Continue as thou hast

begun, and thou shalt not regret it. More I may not tell thee now, but this thou mayest as well know: to-morrow thou art to be bidden to join us upon the first night of Passover to take the place of my brother, who is absent with my father on a journey to the Indies."

CHAPTER IV

THE SEDER

And so it happened. The next day, to the great astonishment and excitement of the other boys, who regarded Joseph as their leader, and could not imagine the Rabbi's purpose, our youth was summoned from his work to receive the invitation of which Esther had spoken. As for Raphael, who was in the secret, no words could picture his state. He was continually discovering new reasons for Joseph's invitation, and it would be difficult to say how many possibilities he had pictured as the consequence of his

friend's visit, or how many air-castles he had built.

"I knew," said he, "that the Rabbi would not be long in detecting that thou art no common apprentice. This must surely mean thy promotion. Thou wilt now have a chance to become a famous goldsmith, and then thou wilt amass great wealth. I can almost see thee in a magnificent house, a man of position, with that grave air thou hast even now. Perchance we shall not be friends then," he added wistfully.

"Methinks that thou art just a little before season with thy lugubrious farewells," responded Joseph, laughing. "Thou art like the youth in the tale, who could see a palace and great station rising from the

sale of a basket of common pottery, and, behold, so engrossed was he in his idle dream that he kicked his basket over, and shattered its contents, ere he had an opportunity to sell the first piece. So, now, awake thee, dreamer, and look upon the reality of day-time. To me 'tis more than probable that Maimon regards me in the light of the poor stranger whom Jews are bidden to receive upon holy days—but, look thou, should I not purchase some garments more fit than any I have?"

Raphael, shaking his head and unconvinced, accompanied Joseph to one of the street bazaars, or shops, which resembled nothing so much as an open shop window with its display of goods. The merchant

sat, cross-legged, upon a cushion, while the boys made their selection of a white linen suit with a bright silk sash. This over, they marched home with the clothes to repeat the tale to Dame Rebecca, who was almost as sanguine over it as Raphael. And next evening, when Joseph was arrayed in his new finery, what joy there was! For Raphael had no trace of jealousy in his disposition, and Dame Rebecca cared as much for the homeless boy as though he had been her own son.

Not without trepidation Joseph repaired to the Rabbi's. It was the first time he was to go as a guest, and it was no small matter to be invited to so great a house.

He was met in the reception room by the Rabbi, who conducted him

to another and richer apartment, where he was received by the rest of the family, including the wife and daughter of David Maimon. He was welcomed by each member so cordially that he felt instantly at ease, and conversed readily with the Rabbi's wife, who was beautifully dressed, and wore much precious jewelry. She was interested in Joseph, and to him she seemed just the kind of big-hearted, motherly woman to whom it was a pleasure for a boy to talk.

During his conversation with her aunt, Esther watched him. A mischievous smile played about the corners of her mouth, when it occurred to her that she must receive him as a stranger, though she had known him so long. As soon

as she had an opportunity, she demurely bade him welcome, adding in a low tone that she was glad to see him among them, and have her mother know him. From this Joseph inferred that, as he was now known to the family, there was no wrong in their friendship, and that she could thereafter recognize him without seeming ill-bred. To show that he meant to take full advantage of his privilege, he continued to talk to her until the Rabbi led the way into another room, which in modern times would be called a dining-room. In the centre stood a long, rather low table, which took the place of the small individual tables generally used in the East. It was covered with a white damask cloth, ornamented with an embroi-

dered border and fringes of gold thread. Upon it were three beautifully chased plates of gold, one of which held the shank-bone of a lamb and an egg, signifying the Paschal Lamb and the offering of the Festival. Upon the second plate were three cakes of unleavened bread, and upon the third, the bitter herbs to be eaten in memory of Israel's captivity in Egypt, and the bricks and mortar of their bondage were represented by a paste of almonds and apples, which had been placed in a gold bowl. Suspended from the ceiling was a chandelier of silver inlaid with gold. Its seven arms were curiously wrought lamps, whose flames were fed by perfumed oils. Before each person was a cup filled with

wine, which was brought from Europe, for none could be obtained in Mahometan countries, and the Jews spared no expense or sacrifice in their religious observances.

When all was ready, the servants, who were also Hebrews, took their places at the table, for since high and low had been alike in the eyes of the Lord during Israel's bondage, the Rabbi said that so they were to be considered after redemption. Then the ceremony began.

Maimon, as the master of the house, intoned the Sanctification, after which they drank of the wine. Other prayers followed, which called for the eating of the bitter herbs and the breaking of one of the cakes, the bread of affliction. Then, touching the lamb, they prayed to

be allowed to return to the land of Israel; after which came the history of Israel's servitude and the praises of the Lord sung by Israel's priests since the founding of the Temple.

The services concluded, the precious vessels were carefully removed and the meal served.

Forks and knives being unknown, the meats were all finely chopped and stewed, so that they might be eaten with thumb and forefinger. The only unstewed meat which appeared was a roasted chicken stuffed with raisins and pistachio nuts. Jujubes, peaches, and apricots were cooked with the meats, for sweets were the chief feature of the repast, even most of the vegetables being flavored with them. To Joseph it

seemed as though it were a feast out of a tale.

In truth, it was an occasion to be remembered and spoken of during many an evening and Sabbath afterwards. Raphael listened with wonder to the description of the dinner and the splendor of the table appointments. Joseph had seen parts of the house never penetrated by strangers. Under Esther's guidance he had beheld marvellous furniture of ebony, carved and inlaid with silver, and cushions embroidered in gold and silver. Hangings there were, too, of velvet brought from Genoa and silks from India.

"But the grandest of all were the books," said Joseph. "It seemed to me as though I had entered an

enchanted palace, there were so many of them placed upon shelves, and they appeared so tempting. Truly, I forgot Esther's presence and where I was, and stood longing to handle them," he continued, almost sighing with regret.

"Books again!" exclaimed Raphael with a grimace. "It doth seem as though thou wilt never have enough."

Joseph smiled, for he understood. Raphael remained silent for a few minutes, busily forming a plan from the idea which had suddenly entered his mind.

"Why shouldst thou not attend some of the lectures at the Azhar?" he asked. "They are free to all, and thou mayest come and go as thou listest. 'Tis said that the

libraries are the finest outside of Cordova and Bagdad, and it is now the seat of learning in the East. I shall find out how and when the lectures are given."

"'Twill be the best of all!" exclaimed Joseph, his face bright with anticipation. "It will be a joy to advance as rapidly as we shall then."

"We, indeed!" responded Raphael with playful show of indignation. "But," continued he blandly, "I presume that my presence will be necessary to keep thee out of mischief. If thou art not under some such control, who knows but that thou wilt be up to some of thy pranks, and outrage the dignity of some venerable Imam."

"'Tis very likely that I shall dis-

grace a sedate fellow like thee," answered Joseph sarcastically. "Who was it, I wonder," he continued, addressing the surrounding atmosphere, "that one day, when Yussuf fell asleep, placed inside of his turban a *leef* soaked with water? When the poor fellow awakened, he did but more firmly press the turban upon his head, and thus brought down a shower, which made him believe that the heavens had suddenly opened."

Raphael laughed as he remembered his fellow-apprentice's plight when he clapped his hands upon the palm sponge in his turban.

"We shall allow it to pass without further remark," he continued with gravity of deportment contradicted by his twinkling eyes.

As the Sabbath was the only day of the week which was their own, they made their expedition to the University of El Azhar, "the splendid mosque," on the following Saturday.

It was a great building, constructed so as to surround a square court. Toward Mecca—the holy city—a spacious portico was used as a place of prayer. On each of the other three sides were porticoes, somewhat smaller, and divided into apartments, each destined for a certain number of students.

Each apartment contained a library for the use of its frequenters, and from these books and the lectures of the professors the students were expected to acquire their education. Upon their first attendance

the boys listened to a lecture on algebra, but as it was the Sabbath, they were unable to obtain problems from the library, and were obliged to return for them another day. After this they went as often as they could, and even Raphael became so interested that he forgot to grumble at what he considered his friend's hobby.

Life ran on very evenly for them; there was little to disturb them. After their work was done, they spent the evening upon the roof reading or playing *dameh*, which corresponds to our modern game of draughts. On Fridays, however, they went to the bath, and attended the Sabbath services at the synagogue in the Mellah, spending the rest of the evening with Dame Rebecca.

CHAPTER V

CHAMPION OF HIS FAITH

JOSEPH had been over a year at Fostat, when one day a youth arrived at the work-shop, who seemed known to the others, and appeared to have been formerly employed among them.

Joseph noted with surprise his white linen garments, usually worn only by the higher classes, and during the day he saw that the stranger remained at Abdah's side, and assisted him in the weighing of gold and the assorting of precious stones, which were the chief of the superintendent's duties.

It was not until after midday, when a short time was allowed for the noon rest, that Joseph had an opportunity to speak to Raphael. The two boys occasionally occupied this time in strolling about the city, Raphael pointing out the synagogue, of which Maimonides was the head, or some other noteworthy place in the Mellah. Thus Joseph had soon become acquainted with all the places of interest in the Jewish community, and had come to feel as much at home in Fostat as though born and bred in the city.

As a usual thing, however, the two spent this recess in a sort of cave, which they had found in the outskirts of the city, and to this retreat they went on this day. They were lying upon the ground,

which they had covered with an old piece of carpet, when Joseph recalled the advent of the strange youth.

"Thou must mean Hacam, who arrived to-day," said Raphael in reply to Joseph's question. "He is the son of some dignitary in Damascus, and doth come here to learn the value of precious stones and metals, in order to cultivate his talent for bartering. Thou hast not seen him before, because he was with the Seyid David Ibn Maimon, who hath made a great expedition to the Indies, and hath but returned with a cargo of silks, spices, and precious goods."

"Strange that he should come all the way from Damascus to learn these things," commented Joseph.

"'Tis because the goldsmithy of Maimon is so extensive and well-known, for our chief hath much knowledge acquired in the great city of Cordova, which, as thou knowest, is the fountain-head of all Eastern art. Mayhap Hacam is not averse to using the influence of our Rabbi, who hath the right ear of the Sultan, may he be blessed by the Lord, for he is wise and just. 'Tis a pity that he cannot order the people to his way of thinking. There is much strife with which he hath to contend, and I ween he hath no wish to combat prejudice which is stronger than he, else we Jews were not obliged to humor such as this Hacam."

"Thou dost not seem to bear him great love," remarked Joseph, pick-

ing up a pebble and carefully aiming it at Raphael's foot.

"I do but hope that he hath not again brought with him a stock of trinkets, as he did last time," replied Raphael, drawing in his foot. "I would fain keep my last half-year's wage," he added as regretfully as if he had already invested his earnings.

"Thou hast no need to spend, if thou will it not," said Joseph, amused by his companion's unusually serious mien.

"Much thou knowest, thou wise man," retorted Raphael. "Look thou, being the son of a great man, Hacam doth take advantage of his power to make us purchase his gewgaws for twice their worth. Thou hadst best not let him wot of thy money, else 'tis lost."

"I shall not spend one dirhem, if I do not so choose," answered Joseph with determined air.

"I pray thee, dispute him not," said Raphael anxiously. "He doth more than suspect that some of us who seem Moslems are secretly Jews, and it behooves us to be cautious, for a word from him will bring a mob about our ears."

"It is not needful to seek his company," responded Joseph, "nor shall I. Nevertheless, if he cometh my way, he shall not lord it as he does with the others. Besides, Raphael," he suddenly burst out, "I like not this masking as Mahometans, for is it not expressly ordained that we should suffer death rather than worship falsely?"

"That I cannot answer," replied

Raphael, "but this I do know, that the Rabbi Moses doth recommend outward conformity rather than useless opposition, and did himself pretend Islamism before he gained the protection of the Sultan. And Maimon the whole world knows as an authority, for he is, indeed, a second Moses, come forth to glorify our faith and elevate us in the eyes of the world. So great is his power that both Jew and Gentile consult his wisdom, and thou knowest that every Rabbi and student of the Law uses but Holy Writ and Maimon's Religious Code. 'Tis therefore that the few envious ones here complain that Rabbi Moses' word is allowed to supersede the Talmud. Thus shouldst thou be able to quiet thy conscience. But, Joseph, tell me,"

he continued curiously, "wherefore hast thou tarried here, if it was not to thy liking, for surely there are other cities where the Jews are powerful? Perchance thou mightst become a doctor of the Law, for truly thou wert meant to be greater than a mere goldsmith."

"It is because I have found a home here," the other answered, staring at the ground as though he were thinking of other things. "But wherefore should I not tell thee?" he continued softly as he raised his eyes. "Since it will always be before me, thou mayest as well know, so that there shall be no secret betwixt us, but only that confidence which should be; for thou wert as ready with thy friendship as though thou hadst been

my born brother. Listen then, Raphael," he added passionately. "'Tis not a story that I love to tell, for it hath been burned into my memory with the red-hot irons of grief and desire for revenge." And he told Raphael the tale of his father's death.

"And I have become a goldsmith," he continued, "that I may gain wealth, for is it not the one means by which we Jews may now win power? All their hate of us is naught but envy of the gold which they have neither the wit to gain nor the thrift to save. Give me treasure, and I shall procure the protection of the most Christian king of Europe or the most austere Moslem ruler of Africa. Thus, with gold, even I shall have the power to

wreak vengeance upon the Count de Fournoire, since I shall not submit quietly to the injury which every man of them believes he hath the right to inflict upon us. Mark thou this, Raphael, if every Jew had been less submissive, and had shown some of the fire and courage which animated our forefathers, we should not now be a despised and persecuted people."

"Now thou knowest," he added after a little, "why I shall not follow the steps of learned men, which, indeed, were nearer my heart."

"I had no inkling that thou didst carry such thoughts. Verily, thou hast been planning and thinking this past year as a man would, and I have thought thee simply a boy like myself, with just as much love

of fun and frolic and a greater liking for books," said Raphael, looking at Joseph with all the admiration he would have shown for an elder brother. Silently they returned to their work, Joseph walking with his hand on the shoulder of Raphael, who felt that he now understood his friend better than ever before.

Concerning Hacam, Raphael said nothing more. He hoped that fortune would keep the two boys apart.

A few days later, Joseph, Raphael, and a number of the other apprentices, were spending the noon hour beneath a tree, playing with an ivory ball, which they attempted to toss into a hole a few feet away. Presently they were joined by

Hacam, who quietly watched the game for a little while. Then he offered for sale a small, prettily ornamented ball, which he had taken from his sash. The boys, one after the other, timidly refused, because they had already spent their savings. When it came his turn, however, Joseph said boldly that he did not want it. Hacam looked at him in surprise.

"It is the custom here to purchase what I offer," he said.

"Mayhap it be," answered Joseph calmly, "nevertheless I have no wish for the trinket."

"And I have no wish to keep my stock," returned the other, his thin face flushing and his small eyes glittering with ill-suppressed anger.

Joseph felt his heart beat faster

"'Since I have no money, and do not desire the ball, further dispute were in vain.'"

and the blood rush to his face, but he answered quietly:

"Since I have no money, and do not desire the ball, further dispute were in vain, Hacam."

"Thou hast no money?" asked Hacam, his face wrinkling in derision. "Get it then, for buy the ball thou shalt, thou dog of a Jew."

"I aim not to quarrel with thee," returned Joseph, losing his temper, "but if thou swallow not those last words of thine, I shall speedily deliver thee a sermon such as thou hast long stood in need of."

Both boys were standing now, Hacam sneering and Joseph's eyes sparkling with anger. The others looked on in wonder.

"Do, if thou darest, thou dog-Jew!" Hacam responded, dealing

Joseph a blow with his fist, which was quickly returned with hearty interest. Before the rest could realize it, the two boys had cast prudence to the winds, and were pommelling each other in good earnest.

As soon as Raphael had partly recovered from his astonishment, for no one had believed that Joseph would be so daring, he began, with the assistance of the others, to separate the two combatants; but he did not succeed before Hacam had been partly thrashed, and Joseph somewhat bruised.

As the boys were returning to their work, Hacam addressed Joseph, and said threateningly:

"Thou shalt answer for this!"

"As speedily as it may please thee," coolly answered Joseph, no

suspicion of the sort of revenge Hacam would seek crossing his mind.

That evening, as they walked home, Raphael gave vent to the fears he had been nursing all afternoon.

"A pretty day's labor thou hast made of it, Joseph," he said. "Hacam will not fight it out with thee as men would settle such a disagreement, but will shield himself behind his father's greatness, and then seek to do thee some great injury. Mayhap he will watch thee at some Jewish observance, and then denounce thee as a renegade Moslem."

"Ay, but 'first he must capture the lion, ere he can sell its skin,'" answered Joseph lightly. "But of this, my mentor, I think we may

rest assured—in future he will not be so eager to force his stock upon us."

Here they were interrupted by the muezzin's command, "To prayer! to prayer! all ye faithful, for there is no God but Allah, the God of Mahomet." This summons the boys were obliged to obey, although it was always with a guilty pang that Joseph performed a Mahometan ceremony. They knelt in apparent supplication until many had finished their prayer, so that they might arise without exciting suspicion. No sooner had they gained their feet than they were confronted by Hacam's almost cadaverous face, the more repulsive now by reason of a sarcastic grin. The boys resumed their walk without further

remark, but, notwithstanding his seeming ease of mind, Joseph could not help having a slight foreboding as to the result of his battle. In truth, he had not long to wait ere he discovered that there were good grounds for disquiet.

CHAPTER VI

A PERILLOUS MISSION

THE following morning Abdah approached Joseph, and without even the preface of a greeting spoke of yesterday's dispute.

"What brawl is this in which thou wast yestreen engaged?" he asked. "It doth seem that 'twere sufficient for thee to attend to thy duties, without stirring up the apprentices. Thou art old enough, and hast enough of the looks of a man to warrant thy carrying thyself as one," he continued, grimly glancing at the young mustache and beard which Joseph had ten-

derly cherished during the past year.

"Hacam did truly earn what he received," said Joseph, wishing to let Abdah know that he had not begun the quarrel, "and he hath no cause to murmur, for he had the advantage in age, being three years older than I."

"With thy experience, thou shouldst have had the advantage in judgment," responded Abdah, his face losing some of its habitual grimness. "Next year thou wilt be eighteen and the full-grown man thou dost already seem. But," he added, "think not that thou hast heard the end of this, for it hath come to the ears of the Seyid Moses Ibn Maimon, who would have speech with thee, and demands thy immediate attendance."

Joseph, surprised that so trivial a matter should have reached Abdah, much more his employer, repaired to the Rabbi's house, indignant at the want of manliness which had led Hacam to complain, and apprehensive lest he had incurred his master's displeasure.

He was directed to the laboratory, where he found the Rabbi, who greeted him gravely.

"News of yesterday's altercation hath reached me," Maimon began, while Joseph felt his heart sink, "and I have sent for thee that thou mightst be warned for the future. In antagonizing Hacam thou hast created an enemy who may do more to thy hurt than a hundred friends can benefit thee. Mayhap thou hast done more than this, for

'tis possible that, by thy lack of discretion, thou hast brought misfortune upon many in my house. Thou art aware of the danger from Mahometan bigots, who, though they know that we are Jews, are not disposed to meddle, seeing that I have the Sultan's protection, unless perchance they be prompted by some malicious person, and then all the flower of Saladin's army would avail us nothing against the fanatical fury of a religious mob, urged on by those who are jealous of the Sultan's favor."

Joseph, who had grown red and embarrassed while the Rabbi spoke, forgot his discomfiture, and looked up in alarm.

"Indeed, sir," he said earnestly, "I meant not to do aught that could

harm you. It was in this wise that it occurred. It hath gone somewhat against the grain for me to play the Moslem, and when Hacam cast my being a Jew into my face, as though it were a degradation, my blood boiled, and methinks I lost sight of all but the insult."

"I comprehend what thy feeling was," responded the Rabbi somewhat thoughtfully, "for thou art not the only Jew who regards such treatment with resentment, but we must all be cautious in giving vent to our emotions. As for this acting the Moslem, it is a question which hath many aspects. I infer that thou hast been thus affected: thou hast not felt it right to pray in private as a Jew and in public as a Mahometan, consequently brawling

with Hacam served as an outlet for thy guilty feeling. Is it not so?" he queried, smiling gravely.

Joseph assented, too perturbed to say much, while his master continued:

"Thou needst have no qualms about so worshipping, as I have said in the synagogue; we in no sense pay homage to heathenism by our actions, and do but repeat an empty formula, which cultivated Mahometans themselves know is not uttered in sincerity, but because 'tis necessary to circumvent the bigoted ignorance of the masses."

So interested was Joseph by this time, and so glad to have his doubts settled by such an authority, that everything but the wrongs of the faith he loved slipped from his mind.

"Doth it ever seem strange to you, O illustrious Rabbi, that God should permit heathens to persecute his chosen people?" he asked.

"Who are we that we should venture to question the ways of Israel's God, exalted be His name," answered the Rabbi devoutly. "The sage hath said, that 'if God allows those who transgress His will to live happily on earth, how infinitely great must be the happiness which He hath stored up in the world to come for those who observe His commands!'"

"And I, like a fool, have doubted the sagacity of our leaders!" Joseph exclaimed. "Perchance through over-wisdom I have drawn evil upon my benefactor. It were better that I should journey hence, ere the mat-

ter is noised about," he added, looking anxiously at the Rabbi.

"Thou hast now no need of so serious a step," Maimon answered, "Hacam hath this day returned to Damascus, and perhaps he thinks no more of the matter, nevertheless let it be a warning. But," continued he, "it is of another matter that I would speak to thee. I have need of a messenger who can travel quickly and secretly, letting neither fatigue nor danger easily overcome him."

"You will choose me, I pray you," interrupted Joseph eagerly—

"Nay," said Maimon, slowly stroking his black beard, yet pleased with Joseph's alacrity, "that thou shalt decide, for 'tis a mission fraught with some danger, one

requiring circumspection. Word hath been brought me that Odo, Lord of Jerbail, hath made overtures to the Frankish invaders, and doth meditate delivering into their hands one of the strongholds of Saladin. 'Tis my duty to warn my lord, and it is for that I require a messenger who hath both courage and intelligence. Mayhap he must travel through the enemy's country, for it is not known in Fostat where the Sultan's army lieth. Art thou willing to undertake it?"

"Blithely shall I, were it but to prove my gratitude to my benefactor," quickly answered Joseph, his face brightening at the prospect of some chance adventure, for it was the age of chivalry in both the Christian and the Moslem world.

Many were the glowing tales told of great and noble undertakings, firing the adventurous spirit of young and old, although little chance had a Jewish youth of gratifying his taste in that direction.

"Well and nobly answered!" exclaimed the Rabbi. "I do gladly avail myself of thy service, for I believe that thy wit and fidelity will carry thee through. Listen, then," he continued. "To the Sultan thou shalt deliver a letter, but breathe not a word of thy mission to any one. Shouldst thou, perchance, be questioned, thou bearest medicines to the Sultan from his physician Maimon. Of the Sultan's exact whereabouts I can give thee little intelligence, as I did tell thee. He hath broken camp, and travelled

northward to meet the attack of Richard of England and the other Frankish leaders. At Damascus seek Rabbi David, to whom also I shall give thee a letter. Him thou mayest trust, and to him apply for what directions thou mayest need. It is my belief that thou wilt overtake the Sultan between Jerusalem and Beyrout, for the Frankish expedition has set sail from the Isle of Cyprus, and will land as near the Holy City as may be. Go thou now, and prepare thyself to start at daybreak," the Rabbi concluded, "for the matter brooks no delay. Thou shalt find me at the East Gate with horses and what attendance thou mayest require."

Joseph left the physician. He was overwhelmed by the import-

ance of the errand entrusted to him, but as he began to realize the confidence reposed in him, a new feeling of self-reliance took possession of him, and he felt that he was entering upon man's estate.

He returned to his lodgings to make the necessary arrangements for his departure. He knew that if he fell into the hands of the Crusaders, there was possibility of his not coming back, neither Jew nor Moslem being treated with much consideration. He told Dame Rebecca that he was leaving the city, and was not sure of returning, giving her at the same time some of his clothing to be bestowed upon some needy Jew.

The more precious of his possessions he put into a small chest,

which was to be delivered into Raphael's keeping, and in the event of Joseph's not returning was to belong to his friend. Having done this, he went to the roof to await his comrade's coming and decide upon what he might need in the way of arms and equipment. When Raphael came, Joseph told him as much as he might of his mission, in which there was nothing surprising to Raphael, unbounded as his admiration for Joseph was. They then set out to make a few purchases, including a small dagger for Joseph's personal use. They rightly concluded that the Rabbi would provide what large arms were needed.

Very little sleep either Joseph or Raphael got that night, and both

were up betimes next morning. After taking their morning meal, which had been made ready the preceding evening, Joseph took leave of Dame Rebecca, who was by that time stirring. Then he returned to his companion. The thought of parting and Raphael's unnaturally sober face robbed him of words. They sat looking at each other, silent, until Joseph remembered that time was passing. Arising, he placed his dagger in his sash, and threw his long-hooded cloak over his shoulder. Turning to Raphael, who was now standing, he said gently, "What must be, must be, Raphael."

But Raphael threw his arms about his friend's neck, and the two held each other in close embrace.

"Perchance I may never see thee again, Joseph," said Raphael, his eyes bright and his voice breaking.

"And perchance, by some stroke of luck, I shall make both our fortunes," his friend replied with an attempt at gaiety. "Take it not so seriously, for we shall soon be together again, and do thou not neglect the lectures at El Azhar, for I shall expect thee to tell me much when I return. Thou art almost a man, and, as for me, it seems as though years had passed since I indulged in boyish pleasures. So then, let us part like men, for I may not tarry longer. May God be ever with thee, my friend."

"And with thee also," softly responded Raphael as Joseph left him.

CHAPTER VII

A DESERT JOURNEY

Upon reaching the street Joseph walked rapidly through the deserted lanes and by-ways in the direction of the East Gate. Hardly had he arrived there when a cloud of dust warned him of the approach of horsemen. They proved to be Maimon with some four or five followers, mounted and armed. The entire party halted while the Rabbi rode forward, and, dismounting, greeted Joseph, with whom he walked a few steps so as to be beyond earshot of the others.

Giving Joseph a package bound

with gold thread and bearing the official seal of the Sultan's physician, he said:

"This packet contains the medicines on account of which thou art supposed to be journeying to the Sultan. Place it in thy girdle, and let all believe that it is the cause of thy errand. When thou reachest the camp, demand to see the Sultan in the name of his physician. The packet, as thou seest, has three seals, but the middle one bears the secret sign known only to the Sultan and his council."

Joseph examined the seal, and found that what seemed at first to be the physician's sign was in reality another device, two daggers crossed.

"If there are courtiers with his

Majesty, offer the medicines with the seals uppermost. When he sees the manner of sealing, he will give thee a sign, for which I shall give thee the countersign. From this he will understand that thou dost wish a private audience. This missive," he continued, handing Joseph a letter tied with gold thread and sealed with the secret sign, "thou art to deliver to the Sultan when none are by. It contains the information which is the reason of thy journey. Place it within thy tunic, and," he said impressively, "let none wot of its existence, for the air is full of treachery, and in these war times a man scarce knows friend from foe. Joseph",— the Rabbi's voice became gentle as he placed his hand upon the youth's

shoulder—"I trust thee greatly. Be but faithful, and thou wilt render me a service for which I shall see thee duly recompensed."

"You may rest assured of the loyalty and fidelity which are my benefactor's due," responded Joseph, much moved by the Rabbi's manner, and resolving to let no obstacle stand in the way of serving his patron.

"This hath Esther requested me to deliver unto thee," continued Maimon, smiling imperceptibly and giving Joseph a folded paper tied with silver thread. "It doth seem to me," he added, gravely, "that though having seen thee only once, she takes great interest in thy welfare."

Joseph grew red, but remained silent while the Rabbi went on—

"Nay, blush not so, for I understand that thou dost not wish to tell that she has known thee all along; but think not that Esther saw thee without her uncle's knowledge, although her mother divined it not."

"You knew it?" asked Joseph in wonder. "Believe me, Rabbi," he continued rapidly, "Esther is not to be censured, for I did persuade her into so meeting me."

"I believe thee, inasmuch as thou wouldst shield my madcap niece," answered Maimon laughing, "but neither thou, nor I, nor any one else had so persuaded her, had it not been to her inclination. I did never agree with her mother that a maiden should be held as a blossom to whom the least rough

breath may do injury, and it did please me mightily to see her take interest in the books I lent her, for I warrant thee that she delivered them not without first looking between the lids."

"And you were aware that she lent your books to a strange youth, and yet interfered not?" said Joseph astonished and yet relieved that the Rabbi did not take it seriously.

"Who but me, didst think, put certain books in her way?" asked Maimon. "It were hardly natural for a maiden to choose the works of the learned Rabbis or the philosophy of Greece as interesting reading, but I had a wish to know of what stuff thine intellect was made. But," continued he in a serious tone, "let us to this matter in hand!

These four men are to accompany thee to the camp, and upon the one who is first thou mayest rely as a guide. The others are of the Sultan's household, and will give credibility to thine errand, as they wear the livery of the palace."

Advancing with Joseph toward the horsemen, who had remained in the road, Maimonides spoke to the foremost:

"Ibrahim, this is the youth whom thou and the others are to accompany, and whom ye are to regard as your leader."

Here the four threw themselves from the horses, and after bowing before the royal physician, greeted their young master with another obeisance.

"Spare neither horse-flesh nor

gold," said the Rabbi in a tone of stern command, which seemed to belong to his dignified carriage, "but reach Damascus as speedily as may be. Should you be attacked in the desert, see to it that the youth is safe at the risk of all else, for 'tis upon his Majesty's errand that he journeys."

"He who travelleth from the illustrious Maimon to the great Sultan, upon whom may Allah shower his choicest blessings, hath the right to be protected by our last drop of blood," answered Ibrahim, again bending low. "Upon our courage and good faith the Seyid may rely."

Joseph mounted the horse which had been brought for him, and received a light shield of rhinoceros

hide and a long spear, which was used as the lance was employed in Europe. After placing in his sash the scimitar and another dagger which were given to him, he was fully armed. The party accordingly set off, Joseph, who had already exchanged farewells with Maimon, leading.

They rode on in silence, for time was too precious for trifling, and, indeed, Joseph, grown unaccustomed to riding, was at first too much occupied in accommodating himself to his horse's rapid pace to attend to much else.

The scenery was not new to him; it was only a repetition of the fertile fields of waving grain which Raphael and he had often seen in their holiday excursions. So familiar it

all appeared that our youth soon fell to thinking of the friend whom he had left. He was so busy with his thoughts that he did not observe the intensity of the sun's heat, until Ibrahim suggested a halt for the midday rest.

They dismounted at the border of a small wood, and while one man went in search of a spring, another went to gather dates from a group of palms which grew near by. Those who remained, Joseph among them, looked to their horses, for, like wise travellers, they attended to the wants of their steeds before their own.

They enjoyed their meal of bread and dates, and drank the water from the spring, which had been carried in the leather bottles

brought for the purpose. After this the men retired a little distance to take the noon sleep. Joseph took advantage of solitude to examine Esther's missive. Breaking the thread, he found that it was folded like a letter, and upon opening it he saw the words: "God speed thee, and give thee success."

And then he fell to thinking of Esther and after that of Maimon's last words to him, at which he still wondered, remembering Raphael's rosy predictions when he, the obscure Joseph Ibn Assan, had attracted the notice of the illustrious Maimon. His veins tingled with excitement, as it flashed into his mind that perhaps the Rabbi's condescension toward him was in reality a sign of interest and not

the mark of courtesy which the distinguished man would bestow upon any Jew. "But why should Maimon, who is the Sultan's attendant, and whose companions are the highest nobles in the Empire, look upon nameless me otherwise than as a Jew whose need he has relieved? In truth," thought he proudly, "right happy am I that this journey doth give me a chance to make some payment of the debt."

He was aroused from his revery by his attendants, who had resaddled the horses, and stood awaiting his pleasure. Brought back to every-day thoughts and the importance of his present labor, he quickly gave the order to mount and continue upon their way.

They passed out of Egypt into Arabia, traversing the country through which, centuries before, the tribes of Israel had wandered, uniting into a nation whose ancient glory was to be sung after they had again become scattered, this time over the face of the earth.

Of this Joseph thought as he observed the change in the character of the scenery. They had reached the sandy plains of the coast, and the monotony of the outlook was varied only by the sand-hills, a continuation of the mountains in the distance. As night drew on, and the sun's rays became less oppressive, Joseph paid more attention to the landscape. The moon, which had just risen, emphasized the blackness of the

sterile plain, covered as it was with pebbles of basalt and flint, and seemed to intensify its general gloom, while the occasional patches of sand or withered grass were rendered more conspicuous by the brightness of the planet's white light. They rode on silently and swiftly, keeping close together, in order not to attract the attention of the roving marauders who lived among the hills. Wrapped in their dark cloaks, our party seemed too indistinguishable a mass to appear, even to the keen eyes of a bandit, as other than a cloud of sand. The excitement of the danger and hard riding had already begun to tell on both men and horses, when Joseph decided upon the need of a short rest, but the night had

worn well on before they entered a depression in the plain which would afford them the necessary shelter. Here they saw a patch of vegetation, which, with a well and a group of black tents, announced the temporary residence of a wandering tribe.

Joseph, having given the signal to dismount, summoned Ibrahim. After a hurried consultation in whispers, they decided to trust to the proverbial hospitality of the Arab nomad rather than to the honesty of his friends of the mountains. Accordingly Ibrahim was despatched with a request for the entertainment of the party, and soon returned with an invitation. At the entrance of the largest tent they were met by an elderly

man, who, notwithstanding his dignity, had a look of cunning, which made Joseph fearful of trusting him. He seemed to be at the head of the small colony, and turned to Joseph as the leader of the party. With a smile he bade them welcome "in the name of God and his Prophet," and conducted them into the tent. As they seated themselves upon the mats, he clapped his hands. Three ill-clad attendants entered in obedience to the summons. At a word from the chief, they placed before the travellers vessels containing camel's milk, which, with coarse bread, formed their supper. The chief sat silently by until they had finished their meal, and then he addressed Joseph.

"Most worthy traveller," said he,

"'tis some time since we have had speech with one who dwells in the city, and we should greatly value tidings of the Sultan, may the Holy Prophet bless and protect his descendant."

"What little I may know is thine, gracious host," answered Joseph, wishing to make up for the lack of confidence which he feared he had shown. "When we rode from Fostat, 'twas said that our illustrious Saladin had new foes in the form of certain Frankish warriors, who have set their minds upon gaining what they are pleased to call the Holy Land."

"As though their Frankish arms could stand firm before the prowess of Mahomet's followers!" exclaimed the chief. "Doubtless thou dost go

with thy men to follow the standard of Saladin."

"It is even so," answered Joseph, glad of any excuse. "And if thou wilt not deem it a poor reward for thine hospitality, I shall ask thee to show us where to rest, for we have ridden long and hard, and have little time for sleep."

"Pardon the curiosity which made me forget my guests' comfort," said the man with humility for which Joseph liked him none the better. "The men will find couches in another tent, but your honor shall rest in the shelter of mine."

Joseph felt his distrust again rising, but he tried to answer cordially:

"Thy thoughtfulness doth claim

my gratitude, and if thou wilt but show me to my place of rest, I shall relieve my worthy host of my company."

The Arab raised a coarse brown curtain at the other side of the tent, disclosing a small recess containing a mattress over which a rug had been thrown. Joseph entered this apartment, and the curtain fell. Believing himself to be alone, he placed the package of medicines and the bag containing the money he had received from Maimon beside him. Had he turned, he would have seen a bright black eye peering through a hole in the curtain. As it was, he could not shake off the feeling of suspicion which had assailed him before.

"Had I not feared to arouse the

covetousness of yon old miscreant, I should have had Ibrahim sleep by me. Still, I shall keep this dagger by my hand, for if ever man had the eye of a rogue, then is my host so gifted," thought he, as he resolved to sleep with one eye open.

Made restless by these thoughts, he slept fitfully, and finally fell into a doze, only to be awakened by a fumbling at the mattress. Sleepy as he was, Joseph was still conscious enough to make no movement. Slowly opening his eyes, he saw a long brown arm thrust through the curtain and reaching for the precious package at his side. As though moving in his sleep, he managed to place his hand upon the blade of his dagger. Swiftly he aimed a blow at the hand near

"Swiftly he aimed a blow at the hand."

his side. The large handle of the weapon descended so heavily that it might easily have broken the wrist. With a sharp cry of pain, the thief quickly withdrew his arm, and all was silent again. Joseph, now alert, sat up and listened, but heard no movement. He felt for the medicines and the money, and found that they were safe.

"I did the old fellow no wrong when I doubted his honesty," thought he. "A right shrewd blow I gave him, but it will teach him to keep his hand at his own side henceforth. Though all is safe, he hath destroyed the rest I needed mightily. I shall sleep no more, but await the arising of the others."

Just before dawn Ibrahim

brought him his breakfast of dried dates and bread, and went to fill the leather bottles at the well. This done, the horses were brought to the tent, and their leader was summoned.

Their host, his right wrist bound up, came forward to Joseph, who had not neglected to reward him, though not sumptuously enough to excite his cupidity.

"May you soon grace our poor tent again," said this worthy with a pretense of cordiality.

"It will be my pleasure to travel many miles to reward so sweet a night's rest," responded Joseph, giving the man a significant look as they rode off.

The sky was cloudless, allowing full play to the fierceness of the

sun's rays, which, had there been no other cause, would have made our travellers anxious to have their journey over the plain behind them. As far as the eye could reach, there was no sign of life, and the glare of the sun upon the sands was almost blinding, but at noon the heat was so intense that Joseph was obliged to call a halt. A sort of tent was improvised by placing the spears upright in the ground and using their cloaks as an awning.

Here they took their midday meal of bread and dried fruit, which Ibrahim had brought, and the water in the leather cases served as liquid refreshment. The men cared for the horses, while Ibrahim kept close watch upon the

hills, fearing an unexpected attack. A very short rest sufficed, for to linger was to court the notice of wandering bandits, and they resumed their journey, continuing to ride close together, with one always acting as sentinel.

Toward evening Joseph, casting his eyes toward the hills, discerned what seemed to be a party of horsemen issuing from them. He observed them curiously for a few moments, never thinking that danger could attend an appearance made so openly; but when he called Ibrahim's attention to the approaching cavalcade, the guide watched it with marked interest.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" he ejaculated, "they are no other than the same hill-robbers whom

we have been trying to escape. I can tell by the manner of their riding."

Here an arrow struck with a rattle upon one of the men's shields as a warning to conclude the council.

"Do you, Seyid," continued Ibrahim quickly, "ride in the middle. Fall around the master, men, and bear the brunt of the attack. See to it that he is as well protected as may be, for so did my lord Moses command."

"Luckily we are well armed," said Joseph, not altogether relishing this arrangement, elated as he was at the prospect of adventure.

"With your leave, young S'id, I would suggest that we fight not unless it must be, but trust rather to our horses' heels, for these

mountaineers are hardy fighters, whom even the Sultan's soldiers find it nigh impossible to defeat."

"But the horses are not fresh. Shall we be able to outrace them, thinkest thou?"

"At the first sign of danger they will be as fresh as a flower with the morning dew upon it. They are from the Sultan's stables, and their equal is not to be found even in Araby. Many a horse have my legs bestrode, but never before such an one as this."

While Ibrahim was talking, Joseph considered his advice, and as the guide ceased to speak, came to a conclusion.

"We shall do as thou sayest, Ibrahim, and may we make our escape good."

"Ride quickly and lightly as the wind," he said to the others, at the same time urging his own horse, which responded as though perfectly comprehending the danger.

Swiftly they rode through the clouds of sand, moving as lightly as a flying bird skims the surface of the water. They soon out-distanced their pursuers, whose horses were no match for the royal steeds. On they rode, having no time to discuss their escape or even the single mark of the encounter, an arrow that had clung to Ibrahim's shield. There was but slight danger of another attack; still they rested as little as possible, until they came in view of the minarets of Damascus. Here they halted at an inn, and, while the men looked

to the care of the animals, Joseph hastily refreshed himself, and then set out to obtain the necessary directions for the rest of the journey.

CHAPTER VIII

AN OLD SCORE

THE sun was shining brightly upon the gilded minarets and marble palaces of Damascus, "the earthly Paradise" of Mahomet, when Joseph passed the gates which shut off the squalid Jewish quarter. Venders were calling out their wares, and were travelling to and fro, some seeking custom beyond the Mellah, others returning with empty packs. Our youth singled out, from a multiplicity of red brick walls, the one which belonged to the house of the Rabbi David, revered as a teacher and an expounder of the Talmud.

The Rabbi was an old man and tall, with the stoop of the scholar and the beard of a patriarch. He was at his books when Joseph was shown into a room dimly lighted by a latticed window. Arising with gentle dignity, he asked his visitor's business.

"May it please you," said Joseph, bowing, "to pardon this unseemly interruption, for I had not presumed so far but that I bore a missive from the Rabbi Moses Ibn Maimon."

"Thou comest from Maimon? Thou wert welcome an thou didst but bring fresh tidings of him, who is, indeed, Israel's banner," cordially answered the Rabbi as he took the letter. After reading it, he continued, "The information thou dost seek I can give thee, since

I have but this morn had speech with Manasseh, who deals in arms. But first the housewife must prepare thee a meal, for doubtless thou hast obtained no ritually prepared meat on thy journey."

While the meal was being made ready, the Rabbi proceeded to give his visitor the required directions.

"The army," he said, "lieth to the west of Damascus toward Beyrout. With a good animal thou shouldst be able to reach its borders within a few hours, for there are good roads, over which is much travel. When thou comest in sight of the tents, turn boldly from the road, and ride into the camp, as though thou wert going to join some warrior. Further I can aid thee but little, since no more than

scant knowledge of camp-life hath been vouchsafed me. If the Lord, our God, Whose name be exalted, hath seen fit to let His children weep in foreign lands, He hath also, in His infinite mercy, removed us far from the turmoil of the battle-field. Therefore, upon thine own wit thou wilt have to rely for the chance of reaching the Sultan, ere thou hast revealed thine errand. But here is the poor refreshment which I would offer thee," he concluded, as a servant entered with a steaming tray, and placed it on a low stand next to Joseph, who sat upon a seat made of cushions.

It was still early in the afternoon when Joseph started to rejoin his companions, having refused the Rabbi's invitation to spend the

night under his roof, since he felt that it was necessary to make arrangements for pursuing their journey.

The Rabbi accompanied him to the end of the Quarter and even beyond it, Joseph thanking his host for his kindness and receiving the venerable scholar's wishes for his success and welfare.

After they had parted, Joseph strolled leisurely along, looking into the gardens, a number of which were very fine. Many of the houses were as splendid as the palaces of Fostat, and Joseph rightly judged that he was in the better part of the city. Suddenly, as he stood looking at a pomegranate tree, all scarlet with its blossoms, he felt that he was being

watched. Glancing up curiously at one of the latticed windows, he caught sight of Hacam, who, however, showed no sign of recognition. Joseph was amused, and smiled as he walked on, wondering if Hacam were petty enough still to nurse his anger. But he had not gone far, when he felt a touch on the shoulder. He turned and saw two swarthy soldiers.

"Art thou Joseph Ibn Assan?" asked one of the men.

"Yes," answered the astonished Joseph.

"Then thou must accompany us to appear before the Vizier," announced the soldier.

"Wherefore should I appear before the Vizier," Joseph demanded, expecting to get some explanation.

"That is not for us to answer. Thou shalt find out in good time, and may the reason be to thy liking," the man replied, grinning.

Believing that there was some mistake, Joseph accompanied the men without more ado, hoping to have the matter quickly settled.

The passers-by looked at the trio with curiosity, but made no attempt to follow. Nothing in the prisoner's appearance promised any sensational development, and none of them had much inclination to be drawn into contact with the judiciary.

They came to a stop before a great house of stone. The man who had first accosted Joseph still retained his hold upon the prisoner's arm, and turned to the other.

"Do thou go within," he said, "and see if he is wanted, or if he is to be taken to the guard-house."

Joseph still wondered at the occurrence, and stood endeavoring to come to some conclusion as to its cause. He felt sure that it could come from no desire to interfere with his journey, for no one knew the motive of it, and he could think of no act which would make him amenable to the law of Damascus.

The soldier, returning, signified that they were to enter. Accordingly, Joseph was led through the court-yard to the inner court, which was of the most magnificent kind. The marble pavement was inlaid with geometric designs in mosaics, and the overhanging balconies, also of white marble, were filled with

blossoming plants, which shed their perfume over the court below. Around the fountain was an octagonal basin of white marble to receive the water which first sprayed high into the air, and then fell into a succession of small basins, thus forming a kind of waterfall.

At the farther end of the court was an estrade, raised by some four or five steps and extending the entire length of the space. It was of marble, covered with heavy rugs, and in the middle was a seat of carved wood, cushioned with brocade. Stationed in a line across the platform were about twenty slaves, with brightly colored sashes and scarfs and gleaming weapons, a most barbarous guard. Upon the pavement sat the secretary, sur-

rounded by all the paraphernalia for writing. As the soldiers with their prisoner took their position, the door leading to the palace opened, and two men entered the court. The foremost, whom, from his stern appearance together with his green turban and rich dress, Joseph rightly took to be the Vizier, ascended the steps, and as he took his seat, those in the court bent low. He motioned his companion to a low seat of cushions, and all was silent for a moment. Joseph's glance wandered from the Vizier to the youth who sat at his left, and was idly toying with his dagger. With a start he recognized Hacam, who met his look nonchalantly. Instantly Joseph connected his enemy's presence with his arrest.

The soldiers, performing a low salaam, told the Vizier—who seemed in need of no such information—that the prisoner had been arrested at the instance of the Seyid Hacam.

Hearing this and feeling that Hacam had formed some deliberate plan, Joseph grew apprehensive lest he should be prevented from accomplishing his mission.

"Joseph Ibn Assan," began the Vizier, his harsh voice echoing through the court, "thou art charged with repeating Jewish prayers and performing other religious duties which belong to the infidel Jewish faith."

Then, believing that the judge wished to exact the tribute demanded of Jews in many Ma-

hometan cities, Joseph answered, after bowing,

"'Tis true, O Vizier, that I pray according to the liturgy of my people, but, being a traveller passing through the city, I had not thought of the tax."

"It is to answer another and greater charge that thou art here," said the Vizier, his countenance and tone becoming more severe, while Hacam made no effort to conceal the triumphant smile which rose at Joseph's look of blank astonishment. As his gaze travelled back to the Vizier's face, Joseph beheld an expression which filled him with fearful expectation.

Waving his hand toward Hacam, whom he seemed to treat as a social equal, the judge said :

"Give thy testimony, inasmuch as the prisoner must offer his defense."

Then Hacam arose, and, descending from the dais upon which he had been seated, took his place at a little distance from Joseph. Bowing low before the Vizier, he began:

"Know, O Judge, this youth who is now before you was known to me in El Fostat as a Moslem. This morning, as I came from the mosque, I saw him enter the city, and I followed him in order to renew our acquaintance,"—here, despite his apprehension, Joseph could not suppress an ironical smile, for the picture of Hacam's welcoming him appealed to his sense of humor—"but hearing him ask his way to the Mellah, I began to

believe that there were grounds for the suspicions which I had for some time harbored. These were confirmed when I overheard him converse with a Jewish Rabbi. In my horror at seeing one who had been given the liberty of a true believer return to his own perverted faith at the first opportunity, I immediately sought the great Vizier's presence, knowing that in all Arabia there is no truer follower of the Prophet, nor one better fitted to punish this youth's offense. Therefore, your Excellency," continued Hacam, slowly and dramatically, "I charge the prisoner with being a renegade from our Mahomet and from Allah, the God of the Prophet."

Having spoken, Hacam resumed

his seat, while the Vizier, with a sternness calculated to strike terror to the boldest heart, said to Joseph, "What hast thou to say?"

The sound of the playing water in the fountain could be heard through the court, and the sunbeams danced brightly upon the polished weapons of the slaves, while Joseph made a great effort to collect his wits, for the seriousness of the situation was now borne in upon him. Also bowing low before his judge, he made answer:

"My lord, Hacam in a measure speaks the truth, and yet not all the truth. That I passed for a Moslem in El Fostat is true, but never have I been other than a Jew. Though I wore not the Jewish badge, never have I for an

instant wavered in my loyalty to my God and the faith of His chosen people. I did but as many another has done, for it is a common practice of those unable to shield themselves against the consequences of the unreasoning prejudice of the ignorant. In Egypt it is known to many officials, who have the will but not the power to protect us. Comprehending the reason of the disguise, they overlook the fault. Therefore, O Vizier, since I have never given a thought to the worship of any God but the Lord of Abraham, I cannot rightly be considered an apostate from the Moslem faith."

"If thy desertion was overlooked in El Fostat," said the Vizier, "here, in the cradle of the Prophet, thou

shalt find no such leniency. Good proof has been given of thy crime. Thou art a renegade from Islam, and must suffer therefor."

Joseph felt the last remnants of hope slipping away. The Vizier's next words cut into his comprehension like dagger thrusts.

"The penalty thou must know."

"Death," answered Joseph in a low voice, thinking of Maimon and the letter, which could not be delivered now. Then suddenly Esther seemed to rise before him, smiling encouragement. The harsh tones of the Vizier again sounded through the court.

"A chance thou shalt have," he said, "for even in so small a matter as the death of a Jewish deserter, there shall be no reflection upon

the justice of Alfadhel. Renounce thy false faith, and acknowledge Mahomet Prophet of God."

Then Joseph stood erect, and, raising his head high, as his heart swelled with pride, he answered:

"With my last breath I shall praise the God of Israel, who is Eternal and Almighty. The Law which hath been Israel's support through centuries is also mine. The God of Abraham and of Moses, who led our fathers out of bondage, shall be my protection and succor. Not to gain ten years of life would I for an instant deny the faith of His chosen people."

"Twice more shall opportunity be given thee to recant, even according to the word of the Holy Prophet," said the Vizier, looking

at the proud figure before him. "Joseph Ibn Assan, thou art a goodly youth and brave; wherefore shouldst thou give up life for the laws which were rendered null when Allah sent forth the Holy Prophet? Thou art not asked to deny the Lord, Who is our God also, but to accept Mahomet, Whom He ordained greater than Moses. Take this, thy double chance, and embrace Islam."

"Doubly I refuse that same chance!" Joseph's voice rang out. "The Law which the Almighty handed down to Moses upon Sinai, amid thunder, and lightning, and the clashing of elements, is as true to-day as it was at the zenith of Israel's glory. It is the word of the Lord, and shall last for all time. If

a new Prophet hath arisen, we have not so been taught, and since the days when the Lord's voice was heard in His Temple the Law of Moses hath been His word. The tribes of Israel have fought and suffered for it, and I, the least of them, can but die for it."

"Thou hast had the opportunity which I foresaw thou wouldst cast away with the obstinate fanaticism of thy people. But," said the Vizier, "none can question the justice of the sentence which I shall pronounce upon thee."

As the judge spoke, an idea darted into Joseph's mind, staggering him by its stupendous boldness. "I can do no less than try it," thought he.

"I thank you, O Vizier," continued he aloud, making a low

obeisance and keeping his eyes on Hacam's face, "I thank you for the clemency you have shown, which I doubt not will be properly rewarded by the great Sultan, my master."

He felt that his shaft had struck, and rejoiced as he saw his enemy's face fall.

"The Sultan, thy master!" repeated the Vizier.

"Even so, O Vizier," answered Joseph bowing, "for I come from the royal palace as an emissary of the great Maimon, travelling upon affairs of state."

"There is more to this than doth appear," said Alfadhel slowly. Then, rising, he said to Joseph, "Follow me," and walked across the court. He raised a part of the drapery, and passed through the

door which it had concealed, Joseph following.

They entered a small room, which usually served the official as a study. Seating himself and motioning his companion to a heap of cushions, the Vizier said, "The meaning of thy words?"

"That I am on my way to the Sultan, on whom may the joys of this world and the next descend," —Alfadhel bowed his head reverently—"to bear to him these medicines,"—showing Maimon's parcel with the seal of the palace—"the immediate use of which the royal physician, Maimon, deems necessary if the dread tertian fever is to pass from our royal master, and the leader of hosts is to be spared his loyal subjects."

"And I had nigh prevented your purpose. Praise be to the God of our holy Prophet, who hath saved me from exciting the wrath of my master," said the Vizier, almost trembling in his excitement. "Thou art free to resume thy journey. Through yonder door thou wilt find a way leading to the street, but get thee to horse and out of the town as quickly as possible. Should questions arise, bear in mind that I detained thee not a moment after I had become assured of thine identity."

Joseph was not backward in availing himself of this permission, and, having thanked the Vizier, rapidly made his way to the street, where he paused in the warm sunshine to breathe a prayer of thankfulness.

He never saw his enemy again, nor can it be said that he bewailed the fate which prevented their meeting.

He arrived at the inn for the evening meal, and, after a short rest, his party made ready to start, intending to ride through the night. The moonlight was bright, and Joseph, notwithstanding his weariness, determined to reach the Saracen camp next day.

By night-fall they were upon the road to Beyrout, passing soldiers and merchants who were journeying to and from the camp. Joseph's heart grew lighter as he came nearer to the discharge of his master's behests, and the men rejoiced in their proximity to the scene of warlike activity. Stories

alternated with snatches of gay song, levity unchecked by Joseph, who was too much occupied with his thoughts to notice the boisterous gaiety of his followers.

The sun was well above the horizon when the ascent of a hilly road brought them in view of the tents and waving banners of the army.

On and into the camp they galloped, the livery of the men announcing that they were of the Sultan's household.

CHAPTER IX

THE MOSLEM CAMP

THE camp was all bustle and preparation, for the Christian army was in battle array according to last intelligence, and the Saracens were expecting the attack. Armor was being polished, and weapons sharpened. The temper of swords was being tried, and the aiming of arrows practiced. Richly caparisoned horses carrying armed riders were being drilled to bear the force of an attacking lance.

Saladin's army was composed of the many tribes whom he had combined into one people under his

sway. There were the fierce tribes of the deserts, wild and savage, whose vividly colored trappings contrasted strangely with the dignified, white-clad Bedouin cavalry, men of tried courage and well-earned fame. But the flower of the army, Saladin's chief support, were the regiments of Egyptian infantry, disciplined and trained in the Sultan's home wars.

Joseph made his way to the Egyptian tents, hoping there to obtain a guide to the royal pavilion. He and his attendants had dismounted, and were leading their horses in order not to attract too much attention. Carefully they threaded their way through crowds of horses, soldiers, and burden-carrying slaves, until familiar pen-

nants announced the tents of the Egyptian leaders. As they wandered into the heart of the group, they were met by an elderly man, whom Joseph, judging by his green turban, took to be a dignitary of some sort.

Greeting him respectfully, our youth began:

"May it please you, worthy sir, I would request the favor of your direction to the Sultan's tents, for I am come from Fostat bearing medicines from the royal physician."

"Thou couldst have requested no favor which I would more readily grant thee," answered the Sheykh, "for the health of the Prince of the Faithful is now of more than usual importance, with this foreign horde and their blows of iron. But the

Prophet protects his own! Thy men and horses leave here, for thou shalt share the hospitality of the Egyptians. This slave," he continued, summoning one, "shall be thy guide."

Joseph passed on, much interested in the warlike preparations and excited by the clanging of armor and weapons and the hurrying of slaves, who, regardless of the burning heat, were doing the work of pack-mules.

"They say that the slaves are the happiest of all people," thought Joseph, "but methinks I had rather my own troublous lot than that of these soulless men. But who may be these, for light hair, blue eyes, and white skin ne'er belonged to Arabian slave."

Still looking at the men who had

excited his curiosity, he said to the slave:

"Perchance yonder laborers have taken this travail upon themselves by the behest of some enthusiastic Imam, for 'twere scarce possible that those white bodies had e'er before been scorched by the sun."

"The Seyid errs," answered the slave. "These same men are slaves, even like the blackest Nubian in the camp. They are Frankish warriors captured in the onslaught made by the enemy, and they have purchased their lives by accepting their condition. They thrive but ill under the work, and the fever will save them from the executioner's hand, which will descend when the fighting beginneth."

Joseph watched the unfortunates,

and his pity was especially engaged by one poor fellow who was bending exhausted beneath the weight of his burden and the sharpness of the task-master's lash. Our youth's eyes wandered from the marks of the cruel blows to the captive's face. With a start that sent the hot blood surging to his head he recognized the murderer of his father, the Count de Fournoire. All the pity was gone out of his heart now, and he almost rejoiced at the thought of his enemy's sufferings. With all the plans of revenge he had ever formed rushing through his mind Joseph continued his way. The neighing and pawing of fiery steeds, the shouts of warriors, and the clamor of encountering weapons were unheeded by him as he

mechanically followed his guide, nor was he recalled to his present purpose until the slave came to a stop, and he beheld the royal pennants floating from the Sultan's pavilion.

Here he was accosted by the captain of the guard of black Nubians, who were brightly clothed and heavily armed.

Joseph, packet in hand and with an air of authority, requested to be conducted to an officer of the household. He was led through the entrance of the great tent into a kind of ante-chamber, which was separated from the remainder by heavy draperies, and there they were met by a man whose turban and rich dress betokened him an Emir of rank.

To him Joseph stated that he sought the presence of the Sultan, having travelled many miles to deliver certain medicines (he displayed the package) which Maimon deemed imperative for the continuance of the Sultan's health.

"To me thou mayest deliver the packet," said the Emir, "and it will be as safe as though thou hadst placed it in the hand of the Sultan himself. He is giving audience to certain of his leaders, and I may not admit even those of the royal household, though, were he less occupied, I might presume to allow entrance to the emissary of the illustrious Maimon."

"To none may I deliver it but to the Sultan himself, noble Emir. If perchance the welfare of our noble

Sultan is of import to you, seek our lord's presence, and say that there is a messenger without who comes from Maimon, and who refuses to discharge his errand, save in the presence of his Majesty. You shall not regret it, I warrant you."

Joseph's earnestness carried the day, and the officer arose, and passed into the interior of the tent.

In a few minutes he returned.

"Thy persistence has won thee an entrance," he said, "but thou canst scarce expect to have words with the Prince of the Faithful, for he is much occupied. Follow me."

Raising the curtains, he conducted Joseph into the audience-chamber, which was really the Sultan's apartment. It was fitted up lavishly, as the richness of Oriental fabrics and

the prodigality of Eastern fashion admitted. The sides of the tent were hung with bright tapestries, harmonizing with the rugs, into the soft pile of which Joseph's foot sank as if treading upon a down pillow. The divans disposed about the walls of the tent were covered with cushions made of delicate silks, embroidered with gold. A low table of ivory and gold, bearing a gold goblet filled with sherbet, stood before one of these couches. Upon it reclined the Sultan, whose dress, less ostentatious than that of his officer, was of white silk. His sole ornaments were the jewelled dagger in his sash and the magnificent emerald sparkling in the front of his white turban. But this lack of personal adornment detracted

nothing from the Sultan's look of power and kingly dignity. He was a handsome man, and possessed all the royal presence one pictures as belonging to the greatest Arab monarch, whose intellect, courage, and generosity have been sung by generations of Arab historians.

With him were a number of Saracen nobles, one of whom was speaking as Joseph entered. He finished soon, however, and, having bowed, retired to a little distance to receive a cup of sherbet from an attendant slave. The Emir hereupon advanced, and, making a low obeisance, said:

"My lord, the messenger of whom I spoke is here."

"I am occupied with weighty matters. Do thou receive the

packet, and examine its contents," answered the Sultan, as he motioned to one of the nobles, who now stepped forward.

"O King of the age," he said, "I am now ready to render unto you a report of my regiments together with their equipments." Joseph, dismayed by this unlooked-for occurrence, remained apparently unobserved among the slaves at the lower end of the apartment. There he stood, helpless, as the Emir ruthlessly broke the precious seals. Seemingly forgetful of the fact that a stranger was present during the Sultan's council, the officer devoted his attention to the contents of Maimon's packet. Joseph continued in his position, watching the Sultan and trying to form some plan to

reach the royal ear, which, in truth, seemed impossible, so numerous were his attendants. The noble who was speaking had gone into some detail of equipment, which he reported with unnecessary mathematical precision. The Sultan, who had become a little bored by his prosiness, permitted his eyes to wander from his follower to the lower part of the tent and back again. This lack of attention made Joseph's heart give a little leap of exultation, for he then conceived an idea which he immediately attempted to carry out.

As the slaves stirred about to minister to the comfort of the nobles, Joseph moved as far forward as he could, but he was careful to remain in a line with the

Sultan's gaze. Slowly and cautiously he removed his two daggers, and crossed them upon the floor, thanking fate which had blessed the noble Osman with great loquacity. He remained standing, motionless as a statue, his eyes upon Saladin's countenance, and every nerve alive with expectation. The Sultan's glance again travelled to the lower end of the room, and fixed itself unconsciously upon the crossed daggers, and then, as if suddenly comprehending, he raised his eyes to Joseph's face, which immediately flushed. Without moving or changing his expression the Sultan closed his right hand with the middle finger extended, and carelessly placed it upon his right cheek, and, as the Vizier Osman

finished speaking, casually glanced at Joseph. He responded by placing his left hand in the same position upon his left cheek.

The Sultan's eyes brightened.

"Leave us for the present," he commanded curtly, and nobles and attendants, bowing low, passed out.

"How camest thou by the sign?" he demanded peremptorily when they were alone.

"May it please my lord, it was received from the royal physician Maimon, who bade me deliver to the great king, in private, this letter, which contains news of interest to the Star of the East," answered Joseph.

The Sultan received his physician's letter, his lifted eyebrows manifesting wonder, which in no

way seemed to dispel his languid mood. But scarcely had he read the communication when the change came.

Thoroughly roused, he sprang from the couch, and paced to and fro, apparently oblivious of Joseph's presence.

"The foul traitor!" he exclaimed. "As surely as I believe that Mahomet is Allah's Prophet I shall place his head at the gates of his city, as a warning to other rebels, should they draw upon themselves the wrath of Saladin. To protect his worthless life this traitorous dog would barter one of the strongholds of the Prophet's followers, and I shall avenge them, with the help of Allah, whose children he attempts to betray. By the beard

of the blessed Prophet, this Odo shall have strong need of his horsemen. How dare he meditate so open a treachery against his Emperor, the vile traitor!"

He continued his pacing for some minutes, until his excitement had somewhat abated. Throwing himself upon the couch, he saw Joseph, who had remained motionless. He was thinking less of the royal rage than of the Count de Fournoire.

"Maimon hath done well to inform us of this treachery, and shall not rue his loyalty. As for thee, trusty youth, thy master hath chosen his messenger well, for the dust of the road attesteth how earnestly thou hast ridden to do his bidding," said Saladin, smiling at Joseph's travel-stained clothes.

"Nay, blush not. 'Tis but a proof of thy faithfulness to thy master, who shall hear of it. To us thou hast rendered service which must be rewarded, for, please Heaven, before another sundown this Odo shall make his peace in another world. Gold we may not give thee, for our treasury must be expended in defense. But for thy service the ransom of some Christian prisoner shall be bestowed upon thee."

"May it please you, O King," began Joseph, his brain afire and the warm blood all tingling, "there is a Frankish slave in camp whom I crave from your Majesty."

"As thou wishest. It will be as merciful treatment as the Franks have given those of our followers

who have fallen into their hands," answered the Sultan, clapping his hands. At the summons the Emir re-entered, respectfully saluting his master.

"Let this youth wait without for a letter to Maimon, our prince of healers," commanded Saladin. "See also that he chooseth a slave from the Frankish prisoners."

Joseph waited in the ante-chamber, the Emir having ordered the slaves to offer him refreshment. Here he rested until the noble returned with the royal epistle, and together with a few attendants they took their way to the part of the camp in which Joseph had seen the Count.

Suddenly they came upon him, staggering with exhaustion and

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covered with perspiration, but urged on by the sting of the lash.

"'Tis he," said Joseph.

"Release yon slave," ordered the Emir. "He hath been bestowed by the Sultan upon this youth. Give him proper clothing, and do thou," he continued to one of his followers, "see that he is delivered as his master commandeth."

"To the tents of the Sheykh Mahomet," said Joseph.

"It shall be done," answered the Emir. "To thee, good youth, I wish a safe and swift return journey, and do thou tell the noble Maimon from his friend, the Emir Abdel-samad, that the Sultan doth seem to view him with new favor, and hath already spoken thrice of him as the noblest of healers." With

this the Emir left Joseph, who turned to the man in charge of the slaves.

"See that the slave is brought to the Egyptian tents before sundown," he said, "for I must prepare to depart."

"It shall be as the Seyid commands," answered the man, relieving the Count, who looked gratefully at his deliverer.

Joseph, almost too excited to think, returned to the tents of the Sheykh, and threw himself upon a couch, seeking much-needed rest. His thoughts continually recurred to the fate which had thrown his enemy into his power, and, between dreaming exultingly of his revenge and the fitful sleep which exhausted nature demanded, he spent

the time until the Count's delivery into his hands.

He was aroused by the entrance of an attendant who announced the arrival of a Frankish slave.

"Lead him hither," said Joseph, hardly able to subdue his triumphant excitement.

But the Count, believing that his liberty would be given in return for the usual ransom, spoke to Joseph.

"Worthy Moslem," began he—

"Save thy titles for those who care for them," interrupted Joseph. "From me thou mayest expect little consideration."

"I do but wish to know what ransom is demanded, that I may inform my friends and followers, who will make what endeavor is possible to human power. I pray

thee, Sir Moslem, in very mercy make it not great, for a slight drain must now beggar my children."

"Thou mayest expect the same mercy which thou didst show the Jew who was done to death by thy torture," replied Joseph, slowly and fiercely. He watched the Count pale beneath his sun-burnt skin and brown beard.

"Was this same Jew aught to thee?" faltered de Fournoire.

"He was my father!"

"I understand thee," said the Count with dry lips. "I pray thee, take all I have, but deprive not my children of their father's protection. My son is of thy growth. Who shall train him in chivalry and knightly bearing if I am no more?"

"Full knightly art thou," re-

sponded Joseph grimly, "who didst murder a defenseless man, because he was unable to sate thy avarice. 'Twere more a gain to thy son's honor were he spared thy influence, which might beget another of thy kind to visit hatred upon the defenseless Jew. Therefore," he continued sternly, "prate to me no more of mercy, for thou hast found a Jew who bears no injury with humility, least of all the murder of his father. Thy fate awaits thee in Fostat, whither I shall soon return."

CHAPTER X

THE JEW'S REVENGE

A WEEK later Joseph with his party was again at the East Gate of the city of Fostat. But how different the circumstances! The revenge he had dreamt of, and for which he had planned during many a miserable day, was now to be realized. All through the dreary return across the desert he had hardly felt fatigue—he had been barely conscious of anything but the new phase his life had taken on. At intervals, when the mind was worn out with dwelling upon the wretched Count de Fournoire and

his fate, a dream would come to Joseph of a more contented existence in Fostat, with his work and his books, his content heightened by the friendship of Raphael. And with a quickening of the pulse he saw Esther's sunny smile dance like a golden ray across it all.

Such were his feelings when he halted at the city gates. He dismissed his followers, retaining only Ibrahim, to whom he now spoke.

"The others will be rewarded at the palace, but thou must accompany me, Ibrahim, for there is still a task which I would demand of thee. The slave must be disposed of. Seek, therefore, one of the slave-dealers, and say that Joseph Ibn Assan will sell cheaply a

strong man-slave to any who journeys down the Nile into the unknown desert country. When thou hast found such a man, and let him not be one who is sparing of the scourge, conduct him to me, and, should we conclude our barter, the purchase money is thine."

Ibrahim, wondering at the change in his young leader, saluted and departed to fulfil his orders.

Joseph turned to the Frank, upon whose countenance anguish and pride were battling for supremacy. His horse was fastened to Joseph's, and he was, of course, without arms—neither escape nor resistance was possible.

"I pray thee, another word, O Jew," said the Count bitterly, "though little I thought, when we

rode forth to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, that I, Reginald de Fournoire, of pure lineage and unsullied fame, should beg an honorable death from a Jew. I pray thee, O youth, as I have done before, take thy dagger, and with one thrust end my life, but condemn me not to ignominy lower than any heaped upon Frankish beast."

"Thou didst show my father no such mercy," answered Joseph, "but didst lengthen the torture by slow fire and iron bars. Thou shalt have as good cause to regret each moment's suffering thou didst put upon his defenseless gray hairs, as though the gold he could not give thee were poured molten down thy throat."

"The word of a knight, we had no such feelings as thou dost ascribe to us. Thy father's death was encompassed more through drunken folly than hatred of thy people. But I ask thee not to bestow freedom. If thou wilt not deal the blow, give me the weapon, and before thine eyes shall this life be ended. Doom me not to existence and death more wretched and dishonored than was e'er visited on the meanest Jew. That I," he exclaimed, beating his shackled hands against his breast, "whose arm hath been raised in defense of the Holy Sepulchre, should sue for unstained honor from the son of a Jew-usurer!"

"Silence, thou villain!" exclaimed Joseph. "The Sepulchre of which thou dost make such boast is the

tomb of a Jew. Thy honor was stained beyond cleansing on the day when thou and thy roistering companions covered my father's body with oil, and for each finger's breadth so covered thou shalt feel the sting of the task-master; for the fire over which he was held thou shalt feel the scorch of the sun's rays, God's own fire. But no death shall come to release thee. Thou, who wert used to the luxury of courts, shalt toil on parched, weary, and sore, with neither soul nor will, unto the end."

With that they rode on in silence, until they came to the by-way which led to Dame Rebecca's house. Here they were obliged to dismount and walk with Joseph in the lead. Escape was out of the question.

The Count, indeed, would have welcomed death at the hands of a pursuing mob. But Joseph was too cautious to allow him such an opportunity, and after choosing one of the loitering boys to mind the horses, he entered the court-yard with his slave. There they were received by Dame Rebecca, who had been called forth by the unwonted clatter of horses' feet.

"Now the Lord be praised that thou art safely returned," said she, when she caught sight of Joseph. "Raphael hath done naught but prophesy thee untimely misfortune, and no words of mine could comfort him."

Joseph laughed.

"Well I know, good Dame, that both thou and he did while away

many an hour in picturing adventures and in wondering how near or how far from Fostat Joseph might be. But of that and what did befall me we shall speak anon. I would bestow the slave in safety. Mayhap 'twere wiser that I take him to the guard-house."

Dame Rebecca pondered for a minute.

"There is the cellar beneath the house," said she, "which was used, before Saladin's time, as a synagogue. It was built to guard against sudden attack, and hath but one entrance, and that a secret one. There thou canst safely place him, for none can guess his hiding-place, and without aid there could be no escape."

"Then we will have him there

until he is sold. Do thou lead the way, Dame, and I shall see him safely mewed."

The cellar was dark, and there was little remaining to tell of former worship. After carefully examining each corner, holding his candle high, Joseph was assured that there was nothing by which the Count might take his life, and thus cheat vengeance.

The slave secured, Joseph and Rebecca returned to daylight.

"Thou art sore tired, Joseph," said she. "Do thou go above to rest, and I shall send thee food when Raphael cometh."

Joseph went to his room, and threw himself upon the couch, thankful that it was too late to see Maimon. Here he rested until a

sound on the stairs warned him of Raphael's approach. Closing his eyes, he was apparently deeply wrapped in slumber, when his friend cautiously peeped in. But Raphael saw the moving lids of the waking person and cried out, "Open thine eyes, thou great lounger who would cheat me out of greeting thee this long while. I scarce thought to set eyes upon thee again," he added, as Joseph jumped up, and they embraced.

"Has thy journey been without event? What didst thou see in the Sultan's camp? Perchance thou didst see the great Sultan himself?" asked Raphael breathlessly, and without waiting for an answer, went on: "But right glad will our Rabbi be to see thee, for thou must

surely bring a grain of comfort to lighten his misfortune."

"How now, misfortune?" asked Joseph.

"Hast thou not heard?"

Joseph shook his head. "I have had no news of Maimon since we rode from the city, nigh a fortnight ago. So do thou without more lingering read thy riddle."

"After thou hast eaten and rested."

"Dost thou believe that I could rest or eat until I have had the meaning of thy words? Speak, Raphael, 'tis scarce the season to dally."

"Know then," began Raphael unwillingly, "that the Lord hath laid the hand of sorrow heavily upon the house of Maimon. The

Seyid David set sail many days ago, and news has been brought to the Rabbi that the ship with all on board has gone down at sea. It was known all over Fostat that great riches were with the Seyid David, even all the wealth of the Maimons. The goldsmithy is no more, and the Rabbi hath been pressed to abandon his sorrow, for the children of the Seyid David, peace be to him, are without protection; and Moses Ibn Maimon, who stands among the foremost of Fostat, must cast about for means of subsistence. Court favor, it doth seem, fills not hungry mouths."

"Doubtless his great friends fall away now when he stands most in need of sympathy," said Joseph, his tone bitter.

"Nay, there thou dost err, for he is more loved and respected than when a great fortune was his. His practice among wealthy patients hath grown greatly, and a few days since all Fostat did speak of the honor offered him by Richard, whom they call the Lion-hearted of England. It was no less than that our Maimon should become physician to this king, who, it is said, hath one of the greatest courts in Frangistan."

"And so great a change in so few days," said Joseph slowly.

"So quickly all changed that I did but wait for thee, ere I returned to my father's home in Fez," said Raphael.

Joseph looked as if he had not rightly understood, for he had been

so taken up with the sense of his benefactor's misfortunes that it had not yet occurred to him that he would be affected by it. Raphael return to Fez? A conception of all it meant suddenly swept over him. The outlook was indeed dismal. He had returned to Fostat with new hopes for the future. As he was now considered a workman of some capacity, his earnings would have increased considerably. He could, therefore, have afforded to hire teachers and, in a way, set about gratifying his ambition. To have all these plans suddenly upset, made him rebel against his fate and feel as though all the world were fighting him.

It is hard for a boy to have his dreams shattered, yet he may find

comfort and help in the sympathy of his friends; but Joseph, already breathing the strength of dawning manhood, could look for no assistance but that of his own untiring efforts. Although he had no fear for the future, knowing that he could easily obtain work in another city, he realized that he must begin again, a second time made homeless through no fault of his own. It foreboded ill for the Count de Fournoire that his father's unavenged death still rankled in Joseph's mind, and that he held in his power the cause of his misfortune, from whom he intended to exact satisfaction. Adversity had not taught the mediæval Jew forgiveness, although he rarely dared resent injury openly. Deep down in his heart burned

a fire of hatred and desire for revenge, which occasionally found an outlet in some money transaction.

But Joseph was differently constituted. Much reading and thought had filled him with the just but unbending spirit of the ancient and free Jew. Raphael had never seen his friend so downcast before, yet he said nothing, but endeavored to divert his attention by questioning him about his journey. Late at night and long after Raphael had heard of the presence of the Count in the house both friends sought rest. But in the morning Raphael saw that his friend looked no happier.

"Be not so downcast, Joseph," he remonstrated. "Fostat is not all the world. Come with me to Fez;

there, among my people, thou shalt find a home. We are poor, but we are Jews, and thou art my old comrade." Raphael laid his hand affectionately upon the other's.

Joseph, touched, shook his head slowly.

"Thou art a generous friend, my Raphael, but it would never do, for in Fez I know there is more intolerance than here. My unlucky temper would speedily get thee into trouble. Besides, Raphael, I can no longer conceal my being a Jew. There is that within me which says: 'Wander, if thou travellest to the world's end, but seek some place where thy faith may be open, and the love of Israel's God no secret shame.'"

"But," he continued after a little,

"the proof of thy affection is none the less dear to me, Raphael, and should aught that is good ever befall me, thou shalt be the first to know it. I must now take my way to the Seyid Maimon," he added, "to deliver the result of my mission and in a measure to take leave of him, for when thou art gone I shall not abide here. Do thou await my return, and look to the slave, lest mayhap a chance offer him escape."

The thought of leaving the place which had become a kind of home to him brought back all the vain longing which he had suffered after his father's death. He made his way to the Rabbi's house with mingled feelings of bitterness and misery. So wrapped he was in the sense of his own unhappiness that

he hardly noticed the cordiality with which he was received by Maimon and by Esther, who seemed wonderfully mature with her sad eyes and pale face.

"Right truly thou hast served me," said Maimon, "for mine enemies, who would have had the Sultan doubt me, are already silenced. Thou shalt have good cause to mark my appreciation."

"If I have, indeed, served you, O Rabbi, it is but a small part of the service I would fain render you, but let me not intrude upon you in your sorrow. Ere I betake myself to another city, I would take leave of you, with as few words as may perchance express the gratitude which is the smallest tribute that Joseph Ibn Assan may pay the

illustrious Maimon," answered Joseph, forcing the words out, for they seemed to stick.

"Nay, let not thy movements be so rapid, friend," answered the Rabbi, meeting Esther's look with a slight smile, while Joseph became vaguely conscious of a change in Maimon's manner, and began to wonder thereat. "First thou shalt tell us of the slave in thy possession."

"The slave!" exclaimed Joseph with a start, "How came you to know of him?"

"Dost thou believe that we hear naught that happeneth? The death of my brother, may he dwell with the God of Israel, hath secluded me from much that is passing. Nevertheless the man hath friends who

already labor for his freedom. What ransom wilt thou demand for this Gentile?"

"There is no ransom for him, Rabbi, for the blood of my father stains his hand. On the morrow a slave-dealer takes him down the Nile to be sold into some remote region."

The Rabbi stared in astonishment at the young man, who seemed animated by some new feeling, which Esther thought became him mightily

"Joseph, surely thou speakest not in seriousness?" asked the Rabbi.

"It is but the fulfilling of the prayer which hath always been with me. It hath been my dream at night, and its echo has sounded through each day. Willingly I

would have spent the rest of my life striving for the one thing I have gained and rejoice in."

"Shall one of the Jews, from whom the Lord in His beneficence hath never turned His face, degrade that which hath the image of the Creator?" asked Maimonides solemnly.

"The Lord hath heard my prayer," answered Joseph slowly. "He hath delivered mine enemy into mine hands. It is His answer."

"Thou hast misunderstood the Lord's purpose. If He hath given this man into thy hands, it is but to test His children's obedience and to prove that they follow His word. 'Vengeance is mine, I shall avenge,' saith the Lord." The Rabbi raised his hand as the words rolled sol-

emnly from his lips. "Therefore thou shalt not harbor thoughts of revenge, but trust to God, Whose ways are inscrutable, and Who, in His own time, will reward the patience of His children."

"That I may not, O Rabbi," said Joseph, his voice trembling. "If I listen unto you and forego this man's punishment, I shall be as one who hath forgotten his father. At my lying down and at my getting up I shall hear his cries of agony as they stretched him across the cruel bars. Upon every wall I shall see his image as he lay in torture, and then I shall see this man, honored by his own and persecuting others, and he shall stand as a reproach to Joseph Ibn Assan, who could so soon forget

the horrors of his father's death. O Rabbi, you will never see what mine eyes have beheld. Here you dwell in security under Moslem rule, but the Jew in Europe, who dares scarce acknowledge that he hath the wherewithal to purchase his meal, must live in constant terror of every torture that the savagery of men may devise. His children may be struck down, and he may be left tortured half to death to endure the kick of the first slave who may perchance come that way. Their cry, 'Hep! Hep!' comes to him like the baying of bloodhounds, and he knows that resistance were worse than futile. So have mine eyes and ears been assailed, and, as I speak, the scenes again rise, and I may not turn from them."

"Thus men, lost in the contemplation of their own lots, forget the infinite love of God. Measure not His wisdom by ours, for His days are as our lives. In His own time He will hearken unto our prayers, and deliver us from the persecutions of our enemies. Did He not raise up Moses to lead our fathers out of bondage into the Promised Land? Hath He ever failed to listen to the cries of Israel? When our fathers, wandering like disobedient children, lifted up their voices in supplication, did His mercy ever fail them? In prosperity and in misfortune, never hath He without cause averted His face. Wherefore shouldst thou attempt to read His purpose? Break not the laws of thy Almighty

Father and of the people He has chosen to lead."

Joseph said nothing, but paced to and fro, battling with the longing for the revenge which conflicted with the appeal to the Law of the Almighty. The Rabbi, hoping to touch him, continued:

"Bethink thee," he said in a gentler tone, "perchance the man hath a son who needs his protection."

"So had my father, O Rabbi," answered Joseph, standing erect, his eyes sparkling and his chin firmly set. "It is but the rendering of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' according to our Law."

The Rabbi shook his head, as Joseph added in hard tones:

"There would be no rest for me,

were I to know that my father's blood and pain stood unavenged by his son. What right had this Gentile to take the life of a man whose forefathers were of a cultured nation, while his own were still skin-clothed savages? Our history doth give us every right to be considered this man's equal, yet we must perforce bear the persecutions of such as he without a murmur. Because one of them falls into the hands of a Jew, he must advance claims for consideration which never affected him. Small thought did he bestow upon my need when he took my father's life. As he felt for me and mine, so may he expect me to feel for him and his. It is no more than the justice the world owes us."

As Joseph spoke, his tones became harder, and his manner showed a new independence, which was scarcely influenced by the arguments of so eminent a man as Maimon.

"Thou must not view it with the narrowness of a man's comprehension," said the Rabbi. "Think thou upon the infinite wisdom of the Lord, to Whom all time is as nothing, but Who knows even thee and thy misfortune. Abide thou by my words, and trust to the Father Who hath never failed His children in their true need."

Esther, who had remained seated while her uncle spoke, now rose, and went toward Joseph.

"Surely thou wilt not do this thing, Joseph?" said she pleadingly.

"It is manlike that thou shouldst desire revenge for the cruelty of thy father's death. But it is greater and nobler to trust to our God, Who sees alike the mighty and the weak. Thy father is gone, and who comprehends thy sorrow better than I?" she said, her eyes filling. "This man's children are innocent; wherefore shouldst thou rob them of a father, if the Lord hath seen fit to let him live?"

He looked into her brown eyes, his own softening as he saw her tears. Then, turning away, he buried his head in his hands.

"My father, O my father," he groaned. "Tell me what to do."

Esther continued, softly and brokenly:

"Thy father lost his life at human

hands. The seas have made me an orphan. But it was the will of the Almighty, and who shall gainsay the word of the Most High?"

Joseph, in an agony of conflicting emotions, seated himself upon a divan, his head in his arms. Esther waited patiently, her eyes following every movement the tortured soul seemed to make. Finally he arose again, and, as if almost dazed, raised his hand to his head. Then she placed her hand upon his arm, and her voice sounded in trembling but clear accents as she spoke:

"Joseph, I beseech thee, for the sake of thy manhood and for Israel's honor, do not this thing."

A spasm of pain seemed to shoot through his body.

"Esther," he said, and the words

were almost a sob, "thou hast gained what neither argument, threat, nor yet bribe had won from me. The man is free."

"I thank thee, O my friend," she answered simply, and bowing her head left the room.

Joseph seated himself upon the edge of a divan, broken and wearied by the varying emotions through which he had passed.

"I knew I was not mistaken in thee," said the Rabbi, almost joyfully, after a few minutes' silence. "It needed but the touchstone to prove the gold. Thou shalt not regret it in future years, when thou shalt look back upon thy past life and find it clean and pure. Follow the steps of thy father, and add to the glory of his name."

Then, as he placed his hand upon Joseph's shoulder, he continued:

"But thou shalt stay with us this night, for on the morrow I would speak to thee of other things."

CHAPTER XI

DREAMS FULFILLED

THE Rabbi's words were so significantly spoken that Joseph with impatience awaited the next morning, when he should learn their meaning. Recollecting the hints Esther had occasionally dropped, he began to believe that she had long known of the Rabbi's purpose, whatever it might be. Had circumstances not been so changed, he would have concluded that the mystery meant his promotion as a goldsmith. But as it was, what could there be that Maimon, high in station, could say to simple

Joseph Ibn Assan, who was no more to the eminent man than an humble and faithful follower? Curbing his restless thoughts as best he could, Joseph eagerly obeyed when he was summoned to the Rabbi's study the next morning.

Maimon, strange to say, was not at work, although he was seated at the table.

"I have sent for thee that I may tell thee of something which hath been in my mind this year agone. I waited until I had made sure that the time was ripe, and that I had not overestimated thine intellect, for it imported me much to know that thou wert as thy father's son should be, ere I offered thee the career which thou shouldst follow."

Joseph stood with his eyes fast-

ened on the Rabbi's face, hope and expectation filling his heart.

"Joseph," continued Maimon, "thou hast spent two years in my service, and I have followed thee closely. Hadst thou borne thyself other than thou hast, my disappointment would have been great, and I should not have spoken thus to thee."

It rushed into Joseph's mind that Maimon's interest in him was deeper than he had suspected.

"Then your notice of me was not accidental?" he said.

"Dost thou think that the son of a friend is no more to me than a goldsmith who has entered my service? What value has the favor that is mine, if it does not bestow upon me the power to advance my

people? The Lord hath blessed my work, for my worldly interest advances apace. Though I serve Saladin, even his enemy, the great Richard of England, hath offered Maimon a post at his Frankish court. But here, with the people I lead, is my place. With the help of the Almighty no promise of honor shall tempt me from it, for God hath set the seal of approval upon my actions. He took my brother, may His will be done,"—both speaker and listener bent their heads in reverence—"but the treasure which I coveted for the protection of His children hath been spared me. Therefore I shall remain here, following the plans I have laid. Of thy share in them thou shalt hear now."

Joseph was scarcely able to restrain himself. With his hands tightly clasped behind him, he waited for Maimon's next words.

"As thou dost know, I have made some discoveries which are new to the healing art of to-day, yet they must all have been known to the ancient physician. But I could give the world more than this, had I another to follow in my way. Joseph, I have watched thee, and know thee well. Thou art a man now. Wilt thou study under me to be my disciple?"

Joseph, hardly comprehending, was silent a moment, and then stammered out:

"Dost thou mean that I, Joseph Ibn Assan, am to sit under Maimon, the Eagle of Israel?"

"Even so," answered the Rabbi; "thou shalt enter into my study, and even when I am no more thou shalt be to our people such as I have tried to be, an interpreter of God's Law and a protection to the weak."

Then placing his hand upon Joseph's head as he stood, Maimonides added fondly:

"The blessing of the God of Jacob be upon thee, who shalt be as dear to me as mine own son."

And so the end of all his vicissitudes was that the life which, even in his wildest dreams, Joseph had never thought possible, came to him unsought. So truly did he fill the great Rabbi's hopes in his future that it was his great fortune to be the companion of Maimon when he prepared to give the world

his "Guide of the Perplexed." This work, which was of importance, not only to Judaism, but also to the history of mediæval philosophy, is still prized. It was during the creation of this "epoch making work" that Joseph had the honor of sharing the labors of Maimonides, as the beloved and favorite disciple of the immortal Rabbi.

As for Raphael, his joy at his friend's prosperity may be easily imagined. He returned to Fez, to his father's house, but the friendship of the two was not broken, for in later years there was again established, where formerly had stood the workshop of the brothers Maimon, another goldsmithy, carried on by Raphael ben Samuel, the friend of Joseph Ibn Assan.

Esther continued to be the light of her uncle's heart and of still another who dwelt in the house. As time passed, Joseph found that the sweetness and brightness of her nature but increased in his sight, and he always remembered the nobleness with which she fought for his better self on that unhappy night when the Count de Fournoire regained his liberty.

And so we may leave him, in the home which was henceforth to be his, following the footsteps of the famous man, whose beloved disciple he had become.

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